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The Aruba Today Newspaper announces that due to the holidays, we will not be in circulation Friday and Saturday, December 25th and 26th. We will be back on newsstands everywhere bright and early to serve our readers and advertisers first thing in the morning, Monday, December 28th. Until then, Season's Greetings and Happy Holidays from the Aruba Today Newspaper – the ONLY English Newspaper on Aruba!

UK Muslim family blocked from boarding plane to Disneyland

**GREGORY KATZ
SYLVIA HUI**
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister David Cameron will look into claims that U.S. officials prevented a British Muslim family of 11 from flying to Disneyland for a planned holiday. The issue is sensitive because U.S. Republican presidential contender

Donald Trump has called for a temporary ban on Muslims visiting the U.S. due to concerns about extremist attacks. Stella Creasy, a member of the opposition Labour Party, said Wednesday that U.S. officials gave no explanation for refusing to allow her constituents to board a flight from Gatwick Airport on Dec. 15, so she

wrote Cameron seeking his intervention. She said there is "growing fear" among British Muslims that aspects of Trump's plans are coming into practice even though they have been widely condemned. A top Muslim group said cases like this appear to be related to religion and are worrying for British Muslims. Mohammed Zahid Mah-



British Prime Minister David Cameron leaves 10 Downing Street in London, to go to the Houses of Parliament. Prime Minister David Cameron's office says he will look into a lawmaker's claim that U.S. officials prevented a British Muslim family from flying to Disneyland for a planned holiday on Dec. 15, 2015.

(AP Photo/Matt Dunham)

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mood said he and his family — two brothers and their nine children — were told nothing except that they were not allowed to travel to the U.S. despite having previously obtained clearance. "We were the only family that was of Asian, Muslim, sort of appearance, and it seemed a little bit embarrassing that only we were taken out (of the line to board)," he told the BBC. Cameron's office said Wednesday that he would investigate the matter. He had earlier characterized Trump's policy as "divisive and wrong." A U.S. Customs and Border Protection spokesman said the "religion, faith or spiritual beliefs of an international traveler are not determining factors" when deciding if a person can travel to the United States. The spokesman said people can be denied entry for a variety of reasons including health-related issues, prior criminal convictions, security concerns or on miscellaneous grounds. Ajmal Masroor, a London-

based imam and broadcaster, said he received similar treatment when trying to travel to the U.S. for business recently. He told the AP that a U.S. Embassy official prevented him from boarding a Dec. 17 flight and told him his business visa had been revoked. He said he had never had any problem travelling on that visa before. "I asked him why repeatedly and he said 'You must have done something wrong,' without any explanation," Masroor said. He said he feared that U.S. officials were singling out Muslims. "This is absolutely discrimination. It is not acceptable and playing into the hands of the terrorists," Masroor said. The Muslim Council of Britain also said the last-minute denial of boarding privileges without explanation is distressing for Muslims. "There is a perception that such decisions are being made due to the faith or political activism of individuals," the council said. □



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Threat of tornadoes in US South; storm kills 1 in Arkansas

JEFF MARTIN

Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Storms packing strong winds and heavy rain slammed the U.S. mid-section on Wednesday, and officials worried about Christmas yard decorations becoming projectiles.

A tree blew over onto a house in Arkansas, killing an 18-year-old woman and trapping her 1-year-old child inside, authorities said. Rescuers pulled the toddler safely from the home.

The biggest threat for tornadoes was in a region of 3.7 million people in Mississippi, Tennessee and Arkansas and parts of Missouri, Illinois and Kentucky, according to the national Storm Prediction Center in Oklahoma. Twisters were possible from midday Wednesday through the evening.

Elsewhere, the Northeast enjoyed spring-like temperatures as people rushed to finish last-minute shopping. In a reversal of a typical Christmas, forecasters ex-



This photo shows a storm damaged home outside of Atkins, Ark., on Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2015. High winds and heavy rain caused a large tree to become uprooted and fall on the house resulting in the death of an 18-year-old woman and trapping her 1-year-old child inside, authorities said. Rescuers pulled the toddler safely from the home. (Pope County SD photo via AP)

pected New York to be in the mid-60s Fahrenheit (about 18 degrees Celsius)

on Christmas Eve — about the same temperatures as Los Angeles. Only about

half of the U.S. should expect the possibility of a white Christmas.

"I try not to think about it too much because it's very bizarre and it's unusual for this time of year for it to be so warm and for such a long time," said Marla Wojacksyk, 48, who was taking her excited 4-year-old daughter to see Santa Claus at Macy's department store in Manhattan.

"But I have a little girl and she's enjoying the Christmas spirit," Wojaczkyk added, as her daughter Zoe jumped up and down with glee, pulling her mother toward the store's entrance.

In Alabama, heavy rains overnight left some downtown Mobile streets flooded during the morning rush hour.

Across Mobile Bay in the small town of Loxley, Mandy Wilson watched the angry gray sky and told drivers to be careful as she worked a cash register at Love's Travel Stop.

"It's very ugly; it's very scary," Wilson said. "There's

water standing really bad. It's a really interesting way to spend Christmas Eve eve."

The threat of severe weather just before Christmas is unusual, but not unprecedented, said Greg Carbin, a meteorologist at the national Storm Prediction Center. On Christmas Day in 2012, a storm system spawned several tornadoes, damaging homes from Texas to Alabama.

In Tennessee, emergency officials worried that powerful winds could turn holiday yard decorations into projectiles, the same way gusts can fling patio furniture in springtime storms, said Marty Clements, director of the Madison County Emergency Management Agency in the city of Jackson.

"If you go through these neighborhoods, there are a lot of people very proud of what they've put out and they've got stuff everywhere - all these ornaments and deer and everything else," Clements said. □

Woman arraigned in deadly Vegas Strip crash; no plea entered

KEN RITTER

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — A woman accused of intention-

ally plowing a car with her child inside through crowds

of pedestrians on a Las Vegas Strip sidewalk has been arraigned on murder, hit-and-run and child abuse charges. Lakeisha Nicole Holloway stood in shackles Wednesday and didn't enter a plea during her brief court appearance. She barely spoke and nodded to acknowledge that she understood she'll remain in jail through the holidays while both sides investigate

the crash Sunday that killed a woman and injured dozens of people. Defense lawyer Joseph Abood characterized his 24-year-old client as distraught. The judge set a Jan. 20 date for a preliminary hearing of the evidence. Clark County District Attorney Steve Wolfson says additional charges are likely, depending on results of drug and alcohol tests and the police investigation. □

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Democrats grapple with Trump effect as primary draws near

LISA LERER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Months of intense focus on the Republican presidential race have prompted Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton to turn her attention to her would-be challengers in the general election, leaving her chief Democratic rival gasping for airtime. Now, after spending weeks largely out of the spotlight nationally, Clinton plans to intensify her campaign schedule from an almost incumbent-style public effort to a more aggressive approach. With just six weeks left before the first round of primary voting, Clinton plans a series of multi-day swings through Iowa starting in January, interspersing trips there with stops in New Hampshire and other early primary states. Her campaign will also unveil what Clinton has called her “not-so-secret weapon,” sending her husband, former President Bill Clinton, out to hit the stump after months of behind-the-scenes activity. And in a sign of the escalating battle between the two party front-runners, her campaign was forced to engage with Republican Donald Trump on Tuesday after he called Clinton’s bathroom break during the recent debate “dis-

gusting” and said she was “schlonged” in the 2008 race for the Democratic nomination, using a vulgar Yiddish term to describe her loss to now-President Barack Obama. On Twitter Tuesday, Trump denied the word was vulgar and said it simply means “beaten badly.” In an interview Tuesday with The Des Moines Register, Clinton said: “I don’t know that he has any boundaries at all. His bigotry, his bluster, his bullying have become his campaign.” Clinton’s main rival for the Democratic nomination is Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders. Though Clinton leads Sanders in national polls by more than 20 points, the numbers are much tighter in Iowa and New Hampshire, where Sanders has an edge. The Sanders campaign believes victories in those two states would undercut Clinton’s strength and send him into the next contests — in Southern and Western states where he’s polling lower— with a boost of momentum. “You will take that momentum coming out of the states, people will come to you in very large numbers, in very short order, and you will build that into victory,” Sanders campaign adviser Tad Devine told reporters in New Hampshire on Saturday. □



Republican presidential candidate businessman Donald Trump acknowledges the crowd before addressing supporters at a campaign rally in Grand Rapids, Mich. Months of intense focus on the Republican race, and front-runner Trump, have reverberated through the Democratic field, prompting Hillary Clinton to turn her attention to her would-be GOP challengers and leaving her chief rival, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, gasping for airtime. (AP Photo/Carlos Osorio)

Lawmakers spar on visa travel for Iran

ERICA WERNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top Republican lawmakers accused the Obama administration Wednesday of ignoring congressional intent and the spirit of the law in offering reassurances to Iran about new visa rules. “There is no ambiguity,” said House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California. “The administration should follow the law as written and agreed to.” At issue is a new law tightening visa-free travel to the U.S., enacted as part of a sprawling spending bill passed overwhelmingly by Congress last week

and signed by President Barack Obama. The legislation, a response to the Paris terror attacks, deals with the “visa waiver” program that allows the citizens of 38 countries to travel to the U.S. without obtaining a visa. It makes a series of changes, including requiring a visa for anyone who’s visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan in the previous five years, as well as dual nationals with citizenship in any of those countries. This could make travel back and forth to the U.S. more difficult for Iranian-Americans or for Europeans with business dealings in Iran. □

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Airlines prep for holiday crush: More flights, bigger planes

DAVID KOENIG
AP Airlines Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Airlines are shifting the timing of thousands of flights, even adding dozens of redeyes, as they try to avoid delays while hauling millions of passengers from now through the Christmas weekend.

Success or failure could all depend on the weather and Mother Nature isn't making it easy on airlines. Rain and fog in the Northeast caused delays Wednesday morning in Boston, New York and Washington — the busiest part of the country's airspace. Rain in Chicago and Atlanta caused some delays in those cities too. Severe storms that ripped through Mississippi and Alabama, however, had little impact on air travel since no major airports are in those states.

There were about 2,600 delays and 230 cancellations by 2 p.m., according to flight tracking site FlightAware. More than 21,000 flights were scheduled for Wednesday and a typical day sees about 150 cancellations and 4,000 delays.

The catch: flights are extremely full over the holiday period, with most travelers unable to make changes in their schedule. Airlines expect about 38 million passengers over a 17-day period spanning Christmas and New Year's, an increase of about 3 percent, according to an industry trade group, Airlines for America. The group says the average flight could be 90 percent full.

Crowds like that mean that any hiccup in the system

— delays at a major airport, a technology glitch — can ripple across the country and leave tens of thousands of passengers standing in airport lines.

"The biggest factor is always weather," said Amer-

"We saw that through the Thanksgiving holiday season, and we've seen that through November and December," said Steve Hozdulick, Southwest Airlines' managing director of operational performance.

job of adjusting schedules for peak holiday periods. According to Mark Duell of FlightAware, U.S. airlines added up to 700 flights a day on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday, compared with

Some of the additional flights are late at night, which gives travelers more options — and sometimes a lower fare. American and United successfully used the redeye tactic over Thanksgiving.

"Hubs like Houston, Chicago and Denver will see large increases of flights departing after 10 p.m. — very similar to what we did over Thanksgiving," said United Airlines spokesman Charles Hobart. American added night flights at Dallas-Fort Worth, Phoenix and Charlotte.

At Delta, some extra flights will connect big cities that get heavy traffic all the time, while others will go to warm-weather destinations, said spokesman Morgan Durrant. Delta will occasionally use bigger planes. Through Jan. 3 there is an Atlanta-Salt Lake City round trip using a 293-seat Airbus A330 instead of smaller planes such as Boeing 737s with just 160 seats.

The airlines say they will have enough employees on hand to handle the extra passengers.

The Transportation Security Administration is also adjusting staffing, said spokesman Mike England. Wait times at security checkpoints have increased this year, and passengers can expect longer delays during the holidays, he said. Holiday travelers slow the process when they overstuff carry-on bags, which makes them harder to screen. Many travelers are bound to be stressed out. Patience will be a valuable commodity. Along with portable chargers for phones and other gadgets. □



Travelers walk to their gates at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. Airlines are shifting the timing of thousands of flights, even adding dozens of redeyes, as they try to avoid delays while hauling millions of passengers from now through the Christmas weekend. Success or failure could all depend on the weather.
(AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh)

ican Airlines spokesman Ross Feinstein.

Back-to-back storms led to more than 4,300 canceled flights around Christmas 2012. This time the Northeast corridor not only should be free of snow and ice, it should be relatively balmy with temperatures on Christmas Day in the 60s from New York to Boston. But rain and snow are forecast through Thursday in parts of the West, and the South and Ohio Valley could see severe storms before Christmas.

Airlines have been helped recently by the El Niño pattern that has brought above-average temperatures to northern states.

United posted its lowest flight-cancellation rate ever for a Thanksgiving week, and Southwest had its best on-time performance ever for the day before the holiday, which helps reduce other problems such as lost or delayed bags.

From 9 percent to 19 percent of flights were delayed over the peak five-day Thanksgiving period, according to tracking service FlightAware.com. A year earlier, when the weather was worse, delays ran between 12 percent and 31 percent.

Besides the vagaries of weather, airlines in recent years have done a better

the same days last week. They cut about 4,400 flights on Christmas Eve and 5,700 on Friday, Christmas Day, when fewer people want to travel, he said.

Delta Air Lines and its Delta Connection affiliate scheduled 5,253 flights next Sunday, compared with fewer than 5,000 on a typical winter Sunday. Southwest expected Wednesday to be its busiest day, with more than 3,800 flights.

The peak day was last Friday for American, with 6,900 flights, and United, nearly 5,000, but both will also operate increased flights each of the next two Sundays.

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Last minute holiday shopper? There's an app for that

MAE ANDERSON

AP Technology Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Procrastinators, rejoice. This year there are more apps and services than ever before to help last-minute shoppers.

Apps like Curbside deliver orders directly to the trunk of your car, more retailers are offering incentives to buy online and pick up in store, and Amazon Prime Now and other same-day delivery services have vastly expanded this year.

"In some sense, same-day delivery is going to become the new gift card," said Daphne Carmeli, CEO of Deliv which works with retailers to offer same-day delivery. "It used to be 'uh-oh, too late, here comes the gift card.' Now you've got two hours before the cutoff if you want something from national retailers."

That's good news as on-demand services have trained people to put off things until the last minute. This year, 44 percent of shoppers said they planned to wait until December or later to shop for holiday presents, up from 39 percent five years ago,

according to Deloitte.

And as of Dec. 15, an NRF survey found the average holiday shopper has completed 53.5 percent of their shopping, up from 52.9 percent seen by that time last year. Only about 10 percent of those surveyed had finished shopping.

Jaron Waldman, CEO of Palo Alto based Curbside, said that demand for the service, which delivers packages from stores like Target and Abercrombie & Fitch to the trunk of a shopper's car, has skyrocketed. The service, which serves the Bay Area and Los Angeles in California and New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia and Chicago, is seeing about seven times the orders it did last year. Target, Best Buy, CVS and other retailers offer the service. "It's definitely a way to shop to have the certainty you're not going to miss any kind of shipping window," Waldman said. Target spokesman Eddie Baeb said the company has been pleased with results from Curbside and expanded the stores that offer the service from 20 in San Francisco last year to 120 stores, adding the New



Amazon Prime employees push carts with bags loaded with goods for delivery to customers at the company's urban fulfillment facility, Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2015 in New York. This holiday season, Amazon Prime customers, using the Amazon Prime Now app, can choose from thousands of items including gifts, pantry items, and electronics and get free delivery in less than two hours through Christmas Eve.
(AP Photo/Mark Lennihan)

York, Chicago and Philadelphia areas this year. The curbside delivery is "easier and more convenient, knowing how busy people are," at the last-minute, he said.

Other retailers are adding incentives so more people choose "buy online, pick up in store" options. For example, Macy's offered a \$10 e-gift card on a pur-

chase of \$50 or more when an online order is picked up in store via coupon aggregator RetailMeNot, said Brian Hoyt, RetailMeNot vice president of communications. The option lets retailers save on expedited shipping costs and cuts down time for last-minute shoppers, he said.

RetailMeNot's mobile app lets shoppers take advan-

tage of last-minute deals in store too. The app uses a combination of GPS and WiFi signals to pull deals from stores you are in or nearby when you opt in.

"More consumers are using mobile devices versus desktop computers to shop, and that's opened the door to save not just online, but in-store as well," Hoyt said. □

US lobster exports to Europe are down for Christmas season

PATRICK WHITTLE

Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — There will be fewer claws for Christmas in Europe this year.

Less of the record lobster catches that have been a boon for the American fishing industry are making it onto European tables, where they have long been a holiday tradition, from lobster Thermidor in France to Italy's La Vigilia, known in America as the Feast of the Seven Fishes. But a strong U.S. dollar and

a less-than-festive economy overseas mean a weak year for American shippers like Mike Tourkistas.

Tourkistas said lobster's status as a luxury item, coupled with a rising price because of competition from Chinese importers and a weak euro, is motivating some consumers to stay away — even if they can afford it. "Nobody wants to be seen with a lobster claw hanging out of their mouth when the economy is really suffering," said Tourkistas, who is based out of Tops-

field, Massachusetts. Canada and the U.S. export the same species of lobster to Europe — the American lobster, known for its big, meaty claws and popularity with summer tourists to the northeastern New England states. European waters have their own species of lobster, which has evolved as a cultural totem for generations in Europe. Eugene Delacroix's nearly 200-year-old painting, "Still Life With Lobsters," hangs in the Louvre in Paris. Exporters started shipping

large amounts of lobster to Europe in the early 1980s when airspace became available, Tourkistas said, but it has been a popular food item on the continent for centuries. Lobster is popular in stew in Spain, stuffed in the shell with gruyere as lobster Thermidor in France, and with risotto in Italy. Some in the American lobster industry suspect European business will be off more than 25 percent this year. The recent trend reflects the deepening of a longer slide in the

amount of lobster the U.S. is sending to Europe, where supermarkets rely on the crustaceans to draw shoppers around the holidays. Shipments of live and frozen lobster from the U.S. to Spain was valued at more than \$63 million in 2007, but fell to less than \$40 million last year. In Italy, where lobster is sometimes part of the traditional Christmas Eve seafood feast, American lobster imports fell nearly a fifth to less than 8.2 million pounds (3.7 million kilograms) last year. □

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Warm weather for holidays leaves stores in the cold

ANNE D'INNOCENZIO

AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The unseasonably warm weather has left some people feeling cold about holiday shopping.

Rosemarie Nowicki, who lives in Berkeley Heights, N.J., finally spent some of her holiday budget last weekend buying coats online for her family because she hated the thought of being stuck in a store with such mild temperatures outside.

"It's hard to get into the holiday spirit; I've been walking around in short-sleeve shirts and capri leggings," Nowicki says. "I was certainly not going to the mall."

Turns out, lots of shoppers feel the same way as temperatures in cities across the country, including New York and Philadelphia, near record levels for December. The balmy weather hasn't done anything to entice Americans to venture out and shop, which has hurt sales at stores that



Shoppers carry bags as they cross a pedestrian walkway near Macy's in Herald Square in New York. The unseasonably warm weather has left some people feeling cold about holiday shopping. Sales of cold-weather items have been particularly icy. Sales of women's boots in New York, are down 24 percent for the first half of December, according to Planalytics, a weather forecasting firm for retailers. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

depend on the holiday season for up to 40 percent of their annual revenue. Planalytics, a weather forecasting firm for retailers, estimates so far this season mall-based clothing stores have lost \$343 million in sales compared with last

year. That's the largest weather-related loss since 1998 when a devastating ice storm hit parts of the Northeast.

Sales of cold-weather items have been particularly icy. Sales of women's boots in New York, for instance, are

down 24 percent for the first half of December, according to Planalytics. And First Data, which analyzes payments at stores and online, said fur sales fell 20 percent from Oct. 31 through Monday. "Winter didn't happen and so the

clothes, the scarves are not selling," said Ron Friedman, head of the retail and consumer products group at accounting firm Marcum LLP. As a result, he says shoppers will see discounts of 75 percent in after Christmas. The fair-weathered shopping challenge underscores how U.S. consumers, still affected by the Great Recession, remain strategic in their buying patterns. It's a habit they picked up during the economic downturn that's remained ever since. Many shoppers only buy what they can wear, so it stands to reason that they're not buying coats, boots and hats this year. And since cold-weather items are also hot gifts during the holiday shopping season, many of those items are left on store shelves. C. Britt Beemer, America's Research Group, a consumer research firm, estimates that cold-weather items account for 26 percent of overall holiday clothing sales. The National Retail Federation, nation's largest retail group, is still sticking by its prediction earlier in the season that sales in November and December will rise 3.7 percent to \$630.5 billion. That would mark a slowdown from the 4.1 percent growth last year. And figures from First Data show higher overall sales growth for the period from Oct. 31 through Monday compared to the year-ago period. Analysts believe that online businesses are actually benefiting from the warm weather, offsetting sluggish traffic at the stores. "Warm weather has helped online shopping rather than hurt it," said Beemer, adding that people who don't want to be stuck at a mall are buying gift cards online.

Warm holiday weather feels strange for some in US

GENE JOHNSON

Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Astrid Rau just baked 16 kinds of Christmas cookies, including a batch in the shape of snowflakes. But she's nevertheless having trouble getting in the holiday spirit, thanks to balmy weather in her hometown of Perkasi, Pennsylvania.

"I associate cold with Christmas," the 55-year-old says. "And if it's warm it just doesn't feel quite right to me."

A weather pattern partly linked with El Nino has turned winter upside-down across the U.S. during a week of heavy holiday

travel, bringing spring-like warmth to the Northeast and so much snow across the West that even skiing slopes have been overwhelmed. Southerners in large parts of Louisiana and Arkansas awoke Wednesday to tornado watches two days before Christmas. In a reversal of a typical Christmas, forecasters expect New York to be in the mid-60s (more than 15 degrees Celsius) on the holiday — several degrees higher than Los Angeles. The mild conditions have helped golf courses in New England do brisk business, but the pattern comes at a steep cost for ski resorts

that have closed and for backcountry skiers who confront avalanche risks. And like Rau, many Americans complain that it just doesn't feel like the holidays without a chill in the air. Big parts of the county are basking in above-average temperatures, especially east of the Mississippi and across the Northern Plains. Record warmth was expected on Christmas Eve along the East Coast, said Bob Oravec, lead forecaster with the National Weather Service.

He laid the credit — or blame — with a strong El Nino pattern, the warming of surface waters in

the Pacific Ocean near the equator. That's helped drive warm air west to east across the U.S. mainland and kept colder air from the Arctic at bay, he said. In the Pacific Northwest and California, the effects of El Nino haven't really hit yet. They're typically seen in January through March, and the heavy rains and snows in the region are probably not linked to the phenomenon, said Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond. In addition to El Nino, a weather pattern called the North Atlantic Oscillation is also helping keep cold air bottled up in the Arctic.

Spain's Socialist leader won't support Rajoy in his PM bid

ALAN CLENDENNING

Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — The leader of Spain's opposition Socialists said Wednesday he will not support any effort by acting Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy to stay on in his post via a coalition or a minority government. Pedro Sanchez made the declaration to reporters

after meeting with Rajoy, who is trying to negotiate a way for him and his center-right Popular Party to remain in power after it won the most votes in a national election Sunday but fell far short of a parliamentary majority.

Rajoy did not comment after the two met at the presidential palace.

The splintered vote that marked the end of three decades of two-party domination in Spain gave Rajoy's party 123 seats in the 350-member lower house of parliament, down from the 186 it won in 2011. The Socialists got 90 seats, followed by the far-left Podemos and allies with 69 and the business-

friendly Ciudadanos with 40.

Sanchez reiterated that it's up to the Popular Party to first try to form a government because it got the most votes but said he would try to forge one if the Popular Party can't. Spain has never had a "grand coalition" of its two main parties. Rajoy is

scheduled to meet with the leaders of Ciudadanos and Podemos next Monday.

Analysts predict weeks or months of uncertainty before the country has a functioning government led by the Popular Party or the Socialist Party — or a new election in the spring if neither party succeeds. □

New Polish government criticized for democratic backsliding

VANESSA GERA

Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — On the heels of electoral defeat four years ago, Polish right-wing party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski stood before supporters and declared that eventually victory would be theirs. "I am convinced the day is coming," he told his followers, "when we will have Budapest in Warsaw."

It was an expression of admiration for Hungary under Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who has consolidated power by weakening the judiciary, the media and other institutions in a manner condemned by Western powers as undemocratic.

Now, with Kaczynski's Law and Justice party back in power since last month, critics say he is making good on that 2011 promise as the government speeds to embark on a path reminiscent of Hungary's.

On Tuesday the parliament, dominated by Law and Justice, approved controversial new bill that



Leader of the ruling Law and Justice party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, bottom center, and Prime Minister Beata Szydlo, left, applaud after lawmakers voted a new law on the constitutional court, in the parliament in Warsaw, Poland, Tuesday, Dec. 22, 2015. (AP Photo/Alik Keplicz)

will paralyze the Constitutional Tribunal, essentially eliminating the top court's ability to act as a check on new legislation. One of the party's next goals is to consolidate its hold over state media, which is expected to bring a purge of journalists who are critical of the

new government.

The move against the court raised deep concern in the European Union, with a top member of the EU executive writing to Poland's foreign and justice ministries on the matter Wednesday. Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans urged

Polish authorities not to enforce the new legislation "until all questions regarding the impact of this law on the independence and functioning of the Constitutional Tribunal have been fully and properly assessed."

"The rule of law is one of

the common values upon which the (EU) is founded," Timmermans wrote.

But the ruling party says it has a mandate for deep social change after voters gave it the strongest victory a party has ever enjoyed in post-communist Poland: a clear majority of seats in parliament and the ability to rule without a coalition partner.

It says it must make changes to the tribunal because the court is filled with appointees from the previous government who will block its mandate for change.

The tribunal's job is to examine contested legislation to ensure it does not violate the constitution. Its members are legal professionals appointed by the parliament. The court is now filled with many appointments made by the centrist Civic Platform party, which held power for eight years. The last time Law and Justice held power, from 2005 to 2007, it saw its ambitions for deep change stifled by the court. □

France hardens stance on dual-national terror convicts

LORI HINNANT

Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — France's government hardened its position toward dual-national terrorism convicts Wednesday, saying they deserved to have their citizenship revoked as part of constitutional changes upholding the state of emergency imposed after the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris. In a speech presenting the proposed changes, Prime Minister Manuel Valls also left open the possibility of prolonging

the state of emergency beyond its current three-month window, describing an "unparalleled extraordinary situation, an unprecedented fight" that France is facing. The government's proposal came under immediate criticism from human rights groups, including the French anti-racism organization MRAP and Amnesty International. But Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front, sent out a tweet saying it was the first effect of

her party's surge in support in France's recent regional election. The Paris attacks, which left 130 dead and hundreds wounded, were carried out in the name of the Islamic State group largely by French and Belgian extremists. Afterward, the state of emergency allowed security forces to impose house arrests and carry out searches without a warrant. Valls said in 40 days, 2,900 searches had netted 443 weapons, including 40 military-grade

arms. In all, 1,000 people have left from France to join extremists in Syria and Iraq, Valls said, by far the largest contingent from Western Europe.

"We know that the fighters are often grouped according to their language, to train and prepare actions on our soil," he said. This appears to have been the case for at least some of the Nov. 13 attackers, who included French-speaking men who had left to fight for Islamic State.

The plan to revoke citizenship for terror convicts has caused fissures in the Socialist government. But France's justice minister, Christiane Taubira, who had said she was opposed to the measure, was on stage next to Valls when he announced it.

"It is a highly symbolic measure," Valls said. "This is a strong punishment that the nation is lawfully entitled to impose upon someone who commits the ultimate betrayal." □

Wave of attacks kills at least 15 civilians across Iraq



Iraqi security search house to house for Islamic State militants as they enter the southern neighborhoods of Ramadi, 70 miles (115 kilometers) west of Baghdad, Iraq, Wednesday, Dec. 23, 2015. Iraqi security forces' advance was slowed by snipers, roadside bombs and booby trapped buildings, military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasool, told The Associated Press. Rasool said some of the families that were trapped in Ramadi had managed to flee the city and reached safe areas. (AP Photo)

SINAN SALAHEDDIN
Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — A wave of attacks across Iraq killed at least 15 civilians on Wednesday as government forces pressed on with their offensive to dislodge Islamic State militants from a major city west of Baghdad, officials said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks, though they bore the hallmarks of the IS, a Sunni militant group that has targeted Iraqi forces, civilians and especially Shiites. In the Shiite-majority town of Khalis, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of the Iraqi capital, two

explosives-laden cars were detonated. The first car was parked inside a bus station and that explosion killed three and wounded 10, a police officer said. The second car bomb exploded at the town's outdoor grocery market, killing four civilians and wounding eight.

In and around Baghdad, five bombs went off in commercial areas, killing eight civilians and wounding 35, two police officers said. Three medical officials confirmed the casualty figures. All officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to release information. The attacks came a day after Iraqi security forces reported progress in recapturing some areas in the western city of Ramadi, 130 kilometers (80 miles) west of Baghdad, from the Islamic State extremists who control large swaths of land in western and northern Iraq and in neighboring Syria. The IS group has declared a self-styled caliphate on the territory under its control. On Wednesday, the Iraqi security forces' advance was slowed by snipers, roadside bombs and booby-trapped buildings, military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasool, told The Associated Press. Rasool said some of the families that were trapped in Ramadi had managed to flee the city and reached safe areas. □

Saudi king: top priorities for next year are security and economy

A. AL-SHIHRI
AYA BATRAWY
Associated Press
RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP)

— Saudi Arabia's monarch said Wednesday that security and economic development remain the country's top priorities for the coming year as low oil prices keep decreasing the kingdom's revenue. In a televised two-minute speech before the advisory Shura Council, King Salman outlined his domestic and foreign policies, which he said are aimed at serving Arab and Islamic causes as well as fighting terrorism. "The kingdom's foreign policy adheres to fixed principles, its commitment to international agreements, which defends Arab and Islamic causes, aims to fight terrorism and achieve security and stability in the world," he said.

Since assuming the throne in January after the death of his half-brother King Abdullah, former defense minister Salman has made security his foremost concern. Two months into Salman's reign, he launched an offensive into Yemen against Iranian-backed Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, who had overran the capital and other cities in the country, forcing the president and the internationally-recognized government to flee for several months to Saudi Arabia. In April, he set a new course for the monarchy's future, recasting the line of succession and naming his nephew, Interior Minister Mohammed bin Nayef, as his successor. □

2 Palestinian attackers killed, 2 Israelis die in Jerusalem

DANIELLA CHESLOW
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Two Palestinian assailants were shot and killed on Wednesday after stabbing Jewish pedestrians outside Jerusalem's Old City, Israeli police said, the latest in an unrelenting wave of violence that has gripped the region. One Israeli later died from his wounds and another man, who was ap-

parently wounded by the police as they shot at the Palestinian assailants, also died later. Police spokeswoman Luba Samri said the attack happened outside the city's Jaffa Gate, a popular spot for tourists visiting Jerusalem's walled Old City. She said police shot both assailants who were later identified as Palestinians in their early 20s from the West Bank. One

died at the scene and the second later, in hospital. Three people were seriously wounded in the attack, two of whom later died. A 45-year-old Israel man died from multiple stab wounds, while a 40-year-old man died from gunshot wounds, hospital officials said. Samri had said earlier that one of the wounded may have been shot by police officers who were firing at the Pal-

estinian assailants. Since mid-September, near-daily Palestinian stabbing, shooting and car ramming attacks have killed 20 Israelis and an American student. At least 120 Palestinians have died by Israeli fire in the same period, including 82 said by Israel to be attackers. The rest have been killed in clashes with Israeli security forces. □

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Accusations grow against Russia over Syria civilian killings



Syrian refugee Hind Salem, who fled with her family from the central Syrian town of Palmyra, from Russian airstrikes, sits on the ground with her kids at their unfurnished home, in the Turkish-Syrian border city of Reyhanli, southern Turkey. "We had no intention to leave our country at all. But the Russian airstrikes made us leave," she said. (AP Photo/Hussein Malla)

ZEINA KARAM
Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The three missiles fired on a public market in the northern Syrian town of Ariha took the morning shoppers by surprise. In a few moments, the main street, packed with people buying and selling fruit and vegetables, turned into a scene of carnage with burning cars and the wounded screaming in terror. At least 34 civilians were killed in the Nov. 29 attack — one in a growing number of suspected Russian attacks that Syrian opposition and rights activists say have killed civilians and caused massive destruction to residential areas across the country since Moscow formally joined the conflict nearly three months ago. Russian officials have repeatedly rejected the accusations while residents and most opposition activists inside Syria acknowledge they have no way of categorically distinguishing whether planes that carry out a specific attack are operated by Russians or Syrians. But human rights group say the pattern of attacks suggests Russia is flouting international humanitarian law and that it

may even amount to war crimes. In a new report released Wednesday, Amnesty International says it has also documented evidence suggesting Russia used cluster munitions and unguided bombs in populated residential areas. The London-based watchdog denounced Moscow's "shameful failure" to acknowledge civilian killings. Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj.-Gen. Igor Konashenkov rejected Amnesty's claims as "clichés and fakes," accusing the group of relying on activists' claims that could not be checked or proven. He particularly criticized the group's claim that the Russian strikes targeted areas where there were no militants, saying Amnesty had no way of knowing that. "Jihadis in Syria operate in highly mobile units, using Toyota pickup trucks with high-caliber weapons mounted on them," he said. "Each of those vehicles is considered a tactical unit and represents a legitimate military target." Amnesty's report focuses on six attacks in Homs, Idlib and Aleppo provinces between September and November which it says killed

at least 200 civilians.

"Some Russian air strikes appear to have directly attacked civilians or civilian objects by striking residential areas with no evident military target and even medical facilities, resulting in deaths and injuries to civilians," said Philip Luther, director of Amnesty's Middle East and North Africa program.

"Such attacks may amount to war crimes," Luther added.

Amnesty's report also said the group has gathered evidence, including photos and video footage, suggesting the Russians have used unguided bombs in densely populated civilian areas, as well as internationally banned deadly cluster munitions.

The charge echoed simi-

lar accusations by Human Rights Watch last Sunday. The New York-based group said that attacks in Syria using air-dropped and ground-launched cluster munitions have increased significantly since Russia began its military operations in Syria. Cluster munitions, which can be delivered from the ground by artillery and rockets or dropped from aircraft, are by nature indiscriminate and often leave unexploded bomb-lets on the ground. These can maim and kill civilians long after the hostilities or a conflict ends. Russia and Syria among several nations — including the United States — that are not signatories to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which bans the bombs.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban

Ki-moon noted with concern the Amnesty report, deputy spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters on Wednesday. But Haq added that the United Nations "cannot independently confirm the cases presented" in the report.

Konashenkov, the Russian ministry spokesman, flatly rejected the claim that Russian aircraft used cluster bombs in Syria.

The Moscow spokesman singled out Amnesty, criticizing it for taking a "biased" approach toward Russia and adding that the U.S.-led coalition, Syria and Turkey also have conducted airstrikes in Syria where the level of coordination has been poor — suggesting those strikes have also caused civilian casualties. □

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South American left retreats as economic crisis deepens

JOSHUA GOODMAN
Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP)

— After a decade on the advance, the left in South America is in retreat.

Just in the past month, voters in Argentina elected a conservative businessman president over the

litical dynasties are paying the price for broken economies and unchecked corruption, most of South America's governments are run by leftists who came to power as China's economy was taking off over the past 15 years, fueling demand for the region's raw

Wolff, a former leader of the country's M-19 leftist guerrilla movement. "In the past decade it appeared to have stopped moving because the economic conditions were so favorable."

In Argentina, the pro-business mayor of Buenos Ai-

widening corruption scandal at state-run Petrobras, including revelations of millions in payouts from the oil giant to close allies. Polls indicate she's the least popular Brazilian president since the nation's return to democracy in 1985 following a long military regime. But by far, the biggest risk of unrest is in Venezuela. Following its victory in congressional elections, the opposition looks poised to challenge President Nicolas Maduro's increasingly fragile grip on power. Instead of letting his enemies share the political cost of painful reforms to fix triple-digit inflation and widespread shortages, Maduro so far is promising to double down on statist policies that got Venezuela into its mess and to disregard what he calls the "bourgeois parliament."

Still, it would be a mistake to say the left has lost all of its oomph.

The Peronist movement that produced Fernandez still holds a majority in Argentina's Senate, Rousseff's Workers Party remains Brazil's best-organized political faction and Maduro's allies still garnered an impressive 40 percent of the vote in spite of an economy forecast to shrink as much as 10 percent this year.

Other leftist stalwarts in South America remain on solid footing, including Ecuador's Rafael Correa, who enjoys a 52 percent approval rating even as his oil-dependent economy struggles to fight off recession.

Instead of a rightist revival, leadership may be splintering between pragmatists and ideologues, says Christopher Sabatini, an expert on the region who teaches at Columbia University. □



Argentina's President Cristina Fernandez gestures after unveiling a bust of her late husband, and former president, Nestor Kirchner, at the presidential palace in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Voters in Argentina elected a conservative businessman president over Fernandez's chosen successor.

(AP Photo/Ricardo Mazalan)

chosen successor of Cristina Fernandez and Brazil's congress launched an impeachment probe against President Dilma Rousseff, whose approval ratings have been languishing in single digits.

In perhaps the biggest turnabout, voters in Venezuela, where the region's leftward shift began, handed the opposition a landslide victory in congressional elections — its first nationwide legislative win since the U.S.-bashing Hugo Chavez won the presidency in 1998. The backlash comes amid an economic storm of the likes the region hasn't seen in decades. While all po-

materials.

Now that the Asian giant is struggling, prices for the region's copper, soy beans and oil have plummeted along with its currencies, taking with them the aspirations of millions of families that rose into the middle class on the back of the economic boom. At the same time, U.S. interest rates are rising again for the first time in seven years, adding pressure on borrowers already struggling to pay back dollar loans.

"What we're seeing now is a reminder that the political pendulum shifts in South America," says Colombian Senator Antonio Navarro

res, Mauricio Macri, came from behind in the polls to win the presidency on a promise to unwind many of Fernandez's leftist policies, especially on the economy. In his first week on the job, he dismantled taxes on farm exports as well as currency controls blamed for a flourishing black market. In Brazil, President Dilma Rousseff is fighting for her political life. Impeachment proceedings were introduced this month in Congress over accusations she broke fiscal rules to cover up budget gaps for social spending. The probe comes against the backdrop of a shrinking economy and a

Colombia peace talks get blasted by rights groups

LUIS LUGO

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Human Rights Watch this week harshly criticized an agreement between Colombia's government and leftist rebels on judging war crimes committed during the country's long conflict, saying it sacrifices victims' rights to justice and guarantees impunity.

The partial agreement on victims announced this month in Cuba was hailed by the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia as a breakthrough in the three-year-old talks, helping pave the way for the reaching a final peace accord in the coming months. Under terms of the deal, guerrillas and members of the military will be judged by special peace tribunals. Those who confess grave crimes will avoid jail time and instead carry out sentences of a maximum 8 years enlisted in special projects such as clearing land mines and rebuilding war-torn communities traditionally forsaken by the state.

Jose Miguel Vivanco, the Americas director at Human Rights Watch, said the agreement falls short of internationally accepted standards of justice and should be reviewed by the International Criminal Court.

FARC rebels are accused of committing an array of abuses during a half-century of fighting, from sexual crimes to kidnapping, while leaders of Colombia's military have been implicated in a pattern of extrajudicial killings of civilians mischaracterized as rebels.

"No international tribunal has allowed convicted war criminals to evade prison for these types of serious crime," Vivanco said at a news conference in Washington.

Vivanco also criticized what he called a lack of clarity about how members of the new peace tribunal will be appointed. □

Venezuela's lame duck congress appoints justices

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Venezuela's lame duck congress has given initial approval to the appointment of 13 Supreme Court justices in a move the opposition says seeks to undermine its landslide victory in this month's legislative

elections.

The government-controlled National Assembly approved the candidates in its first debate this week. Two more debates and votes remain for final approval and the congress is expected to hold them

Wednesday.

The appointments would fill vacancies left by justices who retired early rather than risk a balancing of the staunchly pro-government high court, and the opposition denounced the move. Opposition candidates

won 112 of the assembly's 167 seats in elections, giving them a "supermajority" to challenge the socialist administration of President Nicolas Maduro. Maduro has vowed to defy the dictums of what he calls the "bourgeois congress." □



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ocean and world-renowned Eagle Beach. Hotels, Casinos & fine dining are within walking distance, and owners can also enjoy water sports at nearby Eagle Beach or play a round of golf at the Robert Trent Jones Jr. Championship Golf Course at Tierra del Sol. Visit our sales office at Blue Residences at J.E. Irausquin Boulevard 266, Eagle Beach, Oranjestad, Aruba. You may also contact us by calling 297-742-9703 (Aruba) or 58-212-286-0584 (Venezuela).

Email: sales@azure-aruba.com, or visit our website www.azure-aruba.com. □

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teers decorate the famous hill in Seroe Preto every year – all of which manages to impress everybody with the unique and colorful creations. It has become a tradition on the Island that locals organize bus rides just to watch these wonderful lighting and decoration displays. The Seroe Preto Holiday Lighting is the biggest one on the Island and most popular. Also very popular over the past few



years are the competitive sponsoring and decorating of the traffic rotundas, where the teams go all out to delight and impress!

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PALM BEACH - On the night of the 21st of December, 2015, Lesley Ann Menco was surprised by her future husband Daniel Bar with a marriage proposal. While Lesley Ann was having a wonderful dinner with her beloved family at the de-

licious restaurant Simply Fish at the Marriott hotel, torches were lit and a spotlight hit the water where the Sunshine Watersports boat driven by owner Eric Croes came up to the beach. Daniel in his handsome suit jumped on the

sand and proposed to his future wife by presenting her the most gorgeous ring. Other Sunshine Watersports owner Marcel Vermeulen lit the fireworks and overwhelmed everybody on the beach. Lesley Ann's dreams became reality, all



professionally supported by event manager Randolph of the Marriott hotel. The Menco Philips family are well known and have been coming to Aruba for 43 years! Lesley Ann was born 27 years ago, came as a baby and came 27 consecutive years to Aruba with her 2 sisters, parents and grandparents. (Photos courtesy of Ruben Becker). □





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Loyal Visitors Honored by ATA at the Marriott Surf Club

PALM BEACH - Recently the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure of honoring a group of loyal and friendly visitors of Aruba at the Marriott Surf Club as Distinguished Visitors. The symbolic honorary title is presented in the name of the Minister of Tourism as a token of appreciation to guests who visit Aruba for 10-to-19 consecutive years. The honorees were Mr. Har-

ry Jay and Mrs. Lori Merle Myers together with their daughters Ms. Danielle Renaye and Ms. Samantha Leigh Myers, all resident of Boston, Massachusetts. All of the honorees are loyal guests of the Marriott Surf Club and they love Aruba very much because of the friendly people, the weather, the sunsets, the beaches, the restaurants, the Casinos, and just about everything else!

They say Aruba feels like a second home where the people are like family to them, and the Marriott Surf Club is truly their 'home-away-from-home.' The certificates were presented by Ms. Darline S. de Cuba representing the Aruba Tourism Authority together with family and friends from the Marriott Surf Club and Mr. Henry Franken. □





- December 24 & 25 2015 -

Christmas Day Dinner

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Shrimp Tempura
Shrimp tempura with pear and toasted walnut on mesclum lettuce with raspberry port dressing

Main Course
Roasted Ham
Slow-cooked roasted ham served with potato puree, Brussels sprouts with pineapple & raisin sauce
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Seahawks Look to Avenge Opening Week Loss to The Rams

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New Christmas Eve Tradition



Western Michigan wide receiver Corey Davis runs with the ball for a 30-yard touchdown reception against Toledo in an NCAA college football game in Toledo, Ohio. The inaugural Bahamas Bowl last season featured a combined 12 touchdown passes and a stunning three-lateral, 75-yard score as time expired before Western Kentucky escaped with a 49-48 victory over Central Michigan. Thursday's matchup between Middle Tennessee and Western Michigan features two of the nation's most prolific receiving tandems.

(AP Photo/David Richard)

Bahamas Bowl Could Feature Plenty of Fireworks Again

STEVE MEGARGEE
AP Sports Writer

The Bahamas Bowl is starting a Christmas Eve tradition for showcasing dynamic passing combinations from outside the major conferences. The inaugural Bahamas Bowl last season featured a combined 12 touchdown

passes and a stunning three-lateral, 75-yard score as time expired before Western Kentucky escaped with a 49-48 victory over Central Michigan. Thursday's matchup between Middle Tennessee (7-5) and Western Michigan (7-5) at Nassau features two of the nation's most prolific

receiving tandems. Western Michigan's Corey Davis and Daniel Braverman have over 1,200 yards receiving each this season, the first time since 2010 that two Football Bowl Subdivision teammates have reached that mark. Middle Tennessee's Richie James and Ed Batties have com-

bined to catch 177 passes for 2,180 yards and 19 touchdowns this year. Those numbers suggest a second straight Bahamas Bowl shootout, but Middle Tennessee coach Rick Stockstill isn't so sure. "Just because this team has a good offense and that team has a good offense,

you don't know," Stockstill said. "I like our defense and I think our defense will rise to the challenge, just like I think our offensive players will rise to this. You don't go into it thinking that it's going to be a high-scoring game."

Continued on Page 18

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Bahamas Bowl

Continued from Page 17

"We faced a lot of good offensive teams this season, and some games have been 27-24 and others have been higher scoring."

Both teams head into the game with plenty of momentum. Middle Tennessee has won four straight and has allowed just seven points in each of its last two games. Western Michigan is coming off a 35-30 road victory over a Toledo team that was ranked 24th at the time, giving the Broncos their first win over a Top 25 team in school history. The Broncos now are seeking their first bowl triumph ever. They've dropped each of their previous six bowl matchups, including a 38-24 loss to Air Force in last season's Famous Idaho Potato Bowl.

"It would be the next step," Western Michigan coach P.J. Fleck said. "That's all it really is, the next step for this to become a tradi-

tional championship-type football team, and that's what we are working on making it."

Here are some things to watch when Middle Tennessee faces Western Michigan in the Bahamas Bowl.

--STOCKSTILL SEEKING RECORDS: Middle Tennessee redshirt freshman quarterback Brent Stockstill, the son of the Blue Raiders' coach, has a chance to set some FBS freshman records Wednesday. Stockstill has thrown for 3,678 yards, 379 shy of the FBS freshman record set by Florida State's Jameis Winston in 2013. He also has 301 completions and needs 20 more to tie the freshman record set by Kentucky's Jared Lorenzen in 2000.

--CONTROLLING THE CLOCK: Western Michigan thrives on its ability to keep its offense on the field. The Broncos have possessed the ball for 34 ½ minutes per game to rank second among all FBS teams in



Illinois defensive back Taylor Barton (3) pursues Middle Tennessee wide receiver Ed Batties (80) during an NCAA football game in Champaign, Ill. The inaugural Bahamas Bowl last season featured a combined 12 touchdown passes and a stunning three-lateral, 75-yard score as time expired before Western Kentucky escaped with a 49-48 victory over Central Michigan. Thursday's matchup between Middle Tennessee and Western Michigan, features two of the nation's most prolific receiving tandems.

(AP Photo/Bradley Leeb)

time of possession, behind only Stanford.

--BALL-HAWKING BLUE RAIDERS: Middle Tennessee has picked off 16 passes and is tied for 15th among all FBS teams in that cat-

egory. Kevin Byard has 19 career interceptions to match Boise State's Darian Thompson for the most among all FBS active players.

-BOGAN'S BURSTS: Western

Michigan redshirt freshman Jamauri Bogan has rushed for 836 yards and 12 touchdowns while averaging 5.8 yards per carry, numbers that made him the MAC freshman of the year. □

Seahawks look to avenge opening week loss to the Rams

JEFF MEZYDLO
Associated Press

(AP) - The Seattle Seahawks have come a long way since opening with a loss to the St. Louis Rams.

With a wild-card spot secured, the Seahawks don't expect to let up while trying to win a sixth straight contest and continue their home dominance of the Rams on Sunday.

Seattle (9-5) fell 34-31 in overtime at St. Louis and dropped to 0-2 with a 10-point loss at Green Bay. The Seahawks sat 2-4 before winning seven of eight to secure a fourth consecutive playoff trip.

"I think you have to stay with what you know and stay the course and make it work out for you," coach Pete Carroll said. "That doesn't mean you don't adapt. You're always adjusting and adapting. But the main themes that you live by, you need to stay true to it."

That means continuing to play at a high level though Arizona has clinched the NFC West and the Seahawks are locked into a wild-card position. Seattle owns the fifth seed based on its tiebreaker over Minnesota (9-5).

"I really don't believe that you should ask players to take a break," Carroll told the Seahawks' official website. "I think they've got to go. If we decide not to play guys for a different reason, that could happen. That's not going to be because we're going to take a step off of the gas pedal right now."

It doesn't appear Carroll will reign in Russell Wilson or Doug Baldwin.

Wilson is the first quarterback in league history to throw at least three touchdown passes - 19 total - and no interceptions in five straight games. Baldwin has 10 TD receptions over a four-game span, joining Jerry Rice as the only players to accomplish that feat. "It's really been great to watch and everybody has enjoyed the heck out of it, and everybody's play has been elevated by it," Carroll said. "It takes everybody to do things like that."

With Marshawn Lynch set to miss a sixth consecutive game because of an abdominal injury and Thomas Rawls done with a broken ankle, Christine Michael ran 16 times for 84 yards in last Sunday's 30-13 win over Cleveland.

"He cherishes this opportunity more than he ever has," Carroll said of Michael, whom Seattle traded to Dallas in September and re-signed after he was released by Washington last week.

Paced by a run game that's averaged 166.6 yards during the five-game winning streak, Seattle has put up 33.8 points per game over the last six. The Rams (6-8) have allowed an average of 23.0 points to go 1-5 on the road compared to 19.5 while going 5-3 at home.

The Seahawks have held two of their last three home opponents to 13 points.

St. Louis, which scored a season high against the Seahawks, recorded 24 or more points four times at home. The Rams totaled 52 while beating Detroit and Tampa Bay over the last two weeks in what could be their final games in St. Louis if a relocation plan to Los Angeles is approved by the league owners.

However, they've averaged 13.7 points on the road and 10.4 during a 10-game skid at Seattle that dates to a 33-27 overtime win Oct. 10, 2004.

"We know who they are. They know who we are," Rams offensive coordinator Rob Boras said. "It just comes down to us doing what we do better than they do what they do. They haven't changed a whole lot (since Week 1)."

Seattle didn't face Todd Gurley in that contest and now gets a look at the talented back who became the first Rams rookie since Jerome Bettis in 1993 to rush for 1,000 yards (1,023) despite being held to 48 on 21 carries in last Thursday's 31-23 win over the Buccaneers. The Seahawks have held their last five opponents to an average of 54.0 rushing yards. □



Seattle Seahawks' Derrick Coleman runs with the ball against the Cleveland Browns in the first half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Dec. 20, 2015, in Seattle. The Seattle Seahawks have come a long way since opening with a loss to the St. Louis Rams, and they are looking to avenge that loss this Sunday.

(AP Photo/Ted S. Warren)

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Panthers have NFL-best 10 players selected for Pro Bowl



Carolina Panthers players celebrate in an NFL football game in Charlotte, N.C.
(AP Photo/Mike McCarn)

NEW YORK (AP) — The undefeated Carolina Panthers led the NFL with 10 players selected for the Pro Bowl on Tuesday.

The Panthers are two wins away from a perfect regular season. Quarterback Cam Newton was picked for the third time, and five

of his teammates were first-time selections, including cornerback Josh Norman and linebacker Thomas Davis.

Joining them will be center Ryan Kalil, who was picked for the fifth time, and linebacker Luke Kuechly, who earned his third selection. Seattle, Arizona and New England each had seven players selected, and Cincinnati had five players picked.

Leading the way for the Seahawks was quarterback Russell Wilson, who was the only member of the offense picked. The rest of the selections were defensive end Michael Bennett, safety Kam Chancellor, special teamer Tyler Lockett, cornerback Richard Sherman, safety Earl Thomas and linebacker Bobby Wagner. Patriots star Tom Brady was selected for the 11th time, most of any player this year. Among the other Patriots honored were tight end Rob Gronkowski and cornerback Malcolm Butler, whose last-minute interception clinched New England's Super Bowl win over Seattle.

Oakland Raiders safety Charles Woodson, who announced on Monday that he will retire after the season, was selected for the ninth time.

Also selected was New York Giants receiver Odell Beckham Jr., who has 91 catches for 1,396 yards and 13 touchdowns, tied for the league lead. Beckham was given a one-game suspension on Monday for his conduct on Sunday against Carolina, when he drew three personal foul penalties.

Twenty-five players selected were first-timers, including three rookies: St. Louis' Todd Gurley, Lockett and Kansas City's Marcus Peters.

Hall of Famers Jerry Rice and Michael Irvin will serve as alumni team captains for their Pro Bowl teams. The draft will be on Jan. 27. The Pro Bowl will be held on Jan. 31 in Aloha Stadium in Honolulu, Hawaii. □

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extended menu has been jubled by many. Driftwood offers daily specials, as well as a delicious 4-course menu for just \$25.95 **Charter deep sea fishing rates:** \$400 - 1/2 day • \$760 - full day. Rates per boat Max. 6 people. **Driftwood Restaurant** Authentic Aruban Seafood Restaurant; Klipstraat #12, Downtown Oranjestad. Tel: (297) 583 2515 www.driftwoodaruba.com Open hours: every day, from 5pm till 10:30pm. Sunday Closed.

Christmas coming, Warriors rolling into NBA Finals rematch

BRIAN MAHONEY
Associated Press

(AP) - On Friday, after gifts are given and dinner is digested, somebody might watch an NBA game for the first time this season.

Christmas, with five nationally televised games, is when the NBA pops onto the radar for some sports fans. If so, they missed Stephen Curry and the Golden State Warriors putting together the best start in league history, winning their first 24 games. They are 26-1 and appear even more potent than the team that beat Cleveland in June to win the championship.

"I said going into the year I think they're the prohibitive favorite, and I think that if you gave me the choice of picking either Golden State to win it or getting the rest of the field, I would take Golden State," said Jeff Van Gundy, who will work the NBA Finals rematch on ABC. "I think they're that big a favorite."

Plenty more has happened. Kobe Bryant said this season would be his last, and Karl-Anthony Towns and Kristaps Porzingis have been terrific in their first.

The Eastern Conference has gotten better, except for the Philadelphia 76ers, who have managed to look even worse.

The dominant story, and dominant team, has been Golden State. San Antonio,

also on the Christmas schedule, isn't far behind, while Cleveland tops the East even without having its team together because of injuries.

And though it feels like the season is just starting to some fans, the reality is all the winning the Warriors have done before Christmas could pay off much later.

"When you get out with the cushion like Golden State has, you can go through a bad stretch where maybe you take an injury to a really valuable piece and you're able to withstand it," Van Gundy said. "I thought home court had a big impact on last year's finals and I think it can have an impact again, so I think that's the advantage of what Golden State and San Antonio have done so quickly."

A look at the five games on Christmas (all times Eastern):

PELICANS AT HEAT, noon, ESPN.

Miami has won on Christmas each of the last six years and is 9-2 all-time on the holiday, an .818 winning percentage that is slightly behind Portland (14-3, .824) for the NBA's best. Dwyane Wade is second to Bryant among active players in appearances and points.

BULLS AT THUNDER, 2:30 p.m., ABC

Two good teams who so far look not quite good enough to beat the power-

fully good team," he said.

CAVALIERS AT WARRIORS, 5 p.m., ABC

Kyrie Irving returned Sunday

in Texas. The Spurs are 23-5 and playing the finest basketball anywhere outside the Bay Area. The Rockets have battled back to .500



Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry, center, drives the ball between Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo, left, and Greg Monroe during the second half of an NBA basketball game Friday, Dec. 18, 2015, in Oakland, Calif. The Warriors won 121-112.

(AP Photo/Ben Margot)

houses ahead of them in their conferences. But Van Gundy won't rule out a run from either, because of the Thunder's trio of Kevin Durant, Russell Westbrook and Serge Ibaka, and the Bulls' depth he believes is best in the East. "I think both of those teams could definitely find their way into the conference finals and then take their shot against a re-

day and will back on the floor where he fractured his kneecap in Game 1 of the NBA Finals. The loser is 4-2 in finals rematches on Christmas, with LeBron James 2-0 in such games.

SPURS AT ROCKETS, 8 p.m., ESPN

Houston reached the West finals last season but San Antonio is again the best

after a rocky start.

CLIPPERS AT LAKERS, 10:30 p.m., ESPN

Bryant has played in 15 Christmas games and scored 383 points, both records on the holiday. Most of that came back when the Lakers were the best in Los Angeles, but that's been the Clippers for a while now. □

NHL Roundup:

Dallas beats Blackhawks 4-0 to go to break on a high

DALLAS (AP) — Dallas goes into the NHL's Christmas break with the overall best record after beating reigning Stanley Cup champion Chicago 4-0 on Tuesday, with Patrick Sharp contributing a goal and an assist in his first regular-season game against his former team.

The Stars remained eight points clear atop the Central Division ahead of St. Louis, which won at Boston. Montreal's flagging form continued with a loss at Minnesota, and the Canadiens are now only a point

above both Boston and Florida, which beat Ottawa to extend its streak to five games.

Dallas' Sharp scored 11 seconds into the third period to give the Stars a 2-0 lead in what had been a game with few chances between the highest-scoring teams in the Western Conference. Jason Spezza and Colton Sceviour also scored for Dallas.

St. Louis' Jake Allen stopped 32 shots for his fifth shutout of the season, helping the Blues beat Boston 2-0.

Vladimir Tarasenko and

Robby Fabbri scored third-period goals for the Blues. It was only the second loss in regulation time for the Bruins in their past 16 games.

Minnesota handed Montreal its fifth successive defeats as Jason Pominville and Charlie Coyle scored in a 2-1 win.

Daniel Carr scored late for the Canadiens, who have lost nine of their past ten games, scoring only 15 goals in the process.

Florida moved within a point of the faltering Canadiens by downing Ottawa

2-1 in a shootout, with Alexander Barkov slotting the winner.

Brandon Pirri also scored a shootout goal for Florida. Roberto Luongo stopped both Ottawa attempts to give the Panthers their fifth straight win. Corban Knight scored in regulation for the Panthers.

Mark Stone scored for the Senators, who have lost their past five road games. New Jersey won 4-3 at Detroit, led by a goal and an assist from Kyle Palmieri. Cory Schneider made 25 saves while Jordin Tootoo,

David Schlemko and Sergey Kalinin also scored for the Devils. They had goals on three straight shots midway through the first period, prematurely ending Jimmy Howard's night.

Dylan Larkin, Mike Green and Riley Sheahan scored for Detroit.

San Jose trimmed their deficit to Pacific Division-leading Los Angeles to eight points by winning 5-3 at the Kings, with Joe Pavelski scoring the tying and go-ahead goals 92 seconds apart in the third period. □

New promotion courts Latino fans to mixed martial arts



Jose Aldo, from Brazil, right, and Chan Sung Jung, from South Korea, battle during their mixed martial arts Featherweight Championship bout in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

(AP Photo/Felipe Dana,File)

GREG BEACHAM
AP Sports Writer
LOS ANGELES (AP) — In the cage under the disco ball at Hollywood's Florentine Gardens, a featherweight from Minnesota nicknamed "Sexy Mexy" puts an arm triangle choke on his opponent, thrilling several hundred fans who paid about \$10 to get in. On television, this mixed

martial arts action reaches about 40 million homes with all the professional polish of a UFC telecast. But a Combate Americas show is accompanied by something unusual in the MMA world: Latino sports fans are the primary reason pro boxing still exists in the U.S., according to no less of an authority than boxing promoter Bob Arum. No current MMA

company is making a bigger effort to convert those Latino fans than Combate Americas, the brainchild of UFC co-creator Campbell McLaren. Once little more than a reality show with big dreams, Combate Americas will grow next year with six events and an array of prominent corporate partnerships. McLaren believes

the Latino market is ready to embrace his growing sport.

"Hispanic fans may have heard of the UFC, but they might not know what it is," McLaren said. "No one has brought along this audience. No one has said, 'We welcome you, whether you know about this sport or not.' We present an environment where the announcers very purposely explain what's going on. They're not talking down to the audience. They don't assume you know something."

Combate Americas was founded four years ago, but the Florentine Gardens fights were its third real event. McLaren has focused largely on the promotion's reality program on the network NBC Universo, enticing Latino viewers into an unfamiliar world with behind-the-scenes stories and training.

That's all changing in 2016: Combate Americas plans to put on a show every other month and has hired staff, selected venues and bolstered its roster.

While Spanish-language skills and Latino roots aren't a requirement, they sure

help. The company is willing to sign fighters with only one Latino grandparent and a level of fluency — or lack thereof — that makes its television producers chuckle, but language skills are nearly as valuable as jiu-jitsu skills to McLaren.

"This is a Hispanic-based fight organization," McLaren said. "It was formed to give new Hispanic fighters an opportunity. That doesn't mean only Hispanic fighters, but we're very focused on it. I think the UFC obviously has a great feeder system set up that's very important to their organization, but I'm looking in places the UFC isn't."

From the Mexican border to the Hispanic-dominated suburbs of Chicago, Combate Americas looks for prospects like Ricardo Palacios, who chose MMA over boxing as a way to lose weight back home in McAllen, Texas.

"I would see a lot of Bruce Lee, Chuck Norris, (Jean-Claude) Van Damme, Steven Seagal, even the Power Rangers," said Palacios, who won a split decision in his Hollywood bout. "MMA can grow like boxing with Latinos."

Ski federation bans drones after camera nearly hits racer

ERIC WILLEMSSEN
Associated Press
VIENNA (AP) — The international ski federation is banning camera drones from

its World Cup races after one of the flying objects crashed and nearly hit Austrian skier Marcel Hirscher during a slalom in Italy.

FIS will prohibit drones "as long as I am responsible ... because they are a bad thing for safety," men's race director Markus Wald-

ner told The Associated Press on Wednesday, a day after the night race in Madonna di Campiglio. "It was huge luck that Mar-

cel was not hurt," Waldner said. "I am very angry." The drone carrying a TV camera came down and shattered on the icy slope just behind Hirscher, a few seconds after the Olympic silver medalist started his second run.

The company responsible for the drone, sports marketing agency Infront, said its initial investigation "indicates a malfunction of the drone."

"The most likely reason is a strong and unforeseen interference on the operating frequency, leading to limited operability," Infront said in a statement. "The pilot followed the official security procedure, purposely flying the drone as close as possible to the ground before releasing it. The aim was to destroy the drone, in order to prevent it from losing control."

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Gift Guide: The season's weird and wacky tech gifts

BREE FOWLER

AP Technology Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Whether you're shopping for a Trek-
kie, a tech-savvy fisherman
or a paranoid chef, gad-
get gifts abound this year.
They may be weird or
wacky, but they are sure to
be memorable as last-min-
ute gifts for the geek who
has everything.

FOODSNIFFER (\$130)

'Tis the season for overeas-
ing, leftovers and food poi-
soning. Got friends who like
to shove meat to the back
of the fridge only to find it a
little past its "use by" date?
The Foodsniffer may be
the gift you're looking for.
The device will "sniff" your
slightly funky chicken,
beef, pork or fish. It senses
certain volatile organic
compounds that are emit-
ted when food starts to
decompose. Through a
smartphone app, you see
whether the meal is fresh,
starting to spoil or spoiled.
The device won't detect
the presence of gastroen-
teritis from bacteria such
as salmonella or e. coli, so
make sure you cook your
food sufficiently, even if it's
deemed fresh.
Online: [http://myfoodsni-
ffer.com](http://myfoodsni-
ffer.com)

HAN SOLO FRIDGE (\$160)

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Solo frozen in carbonite.
This mini fridge's front door
features a 3-D rendering of
a frosty Han and holds 18
canned beverages.
The fridge can switch be-
tween cold and warm
modes, but sadly a dreamy
1980s Harrison Ford doesn't
collapse at your feet when
you switch the heat on. The
fridge door does, however,
give off the same eerie red
glow that appeared when
Princess Leia thawed him
out in "Return of the Jedi."
Want something more
contemporary? ThinkGeek
also sells a tiny \$70 mini
fridge that holds just a six-
pack. It looks like the BB-8
droid from the new "Star
Wars" movie.
Online: [http://www.think-
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geek.com/product/1caf)

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ble sonar on your side.

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the water. Once you cast it,
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they are. It also maps the
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ting you know how deep
the water is and pointing
out obstacles, as far down
as 135 feet, whether you
fishing from shore, boat or
dock.

The device syncs with your
phone via Bluetooth and
displays the images on
your screen. It's not video,
but more like a cartoon
graphical representation
of what's below you.
The app keeps a log of your
excursions. Favorite fishing
spots can be tagged with
GPS in case you need to
come back later to catch
the big one that got away.
Online: <http://reelsonar.com>

"STAR TREK" PHASER (\$150)
"Star Wars" is all the rage
now, with hundreds of



This photo provided by Foodsniffer shows the Foodsniffer device, which connects to a smartphone app, and will "sniff" chicken, beef, pork or fish to check for certain volatile organic compounds that are emitted when food starts to decompose. (Foodsniffer via AP)



This undated photo provided by ReelSonar shows someone demonstrating the use of the iBobber. The iBobber fish finder attaches to your fishing line and floats on the surface of the water. Once you cast it, the iBobber can show you where fish are and how big they are.

(Meagan West/ReelSonar via AP)

products tied to the new
movie. But Trekkies need
their toys, too.

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life, this universal remote
has been recreated with
3-D scans of Star Trek props.
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ing motion rather than but-
tons. It combines the small
mini phaser and the larger
pistol-shaped phaser mod-
els used as weapons on
"Star Trek." The smaller one
can be used separately or
inserted into the larger
phaser, which has a pistol-
grip base.

Beam strengths can be
customized, and the re-
mote makes a variety of
phaser firing sounds. A

metal stand with a hidden
magnet is included, mak-
ing the phaser easy to grab
if your home is overrun by
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MISTLETOE DRONE (\$70)

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geeks without some kind
of drone? Even better,
this drone can act as a re-
mote-controlled wingman
for those looking for a holi-
day smooch.

The mistletoe drone hov-
ers with a pair of counter-
rotating rotors. An infrared
remote provides throttle
and directional control. □

Feds require consumer warnings about older Java software

BRANDON BAILEY

AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —
PC users will see more
warnings about the dan-
gers of keeping out-
dated software on their
machines, under a legal
settlement negotiated by
tech giant Oracle and
regulators at the Federal
Trade Commission.
The FTC says Oracle Corp.
deceived consumers for
several years by promising
that updating their Java
software would keep
them safe from malware
and hacking attacks. Un-
til last year, the FTC says,

the update tool provided
by Oracle did not remove
some older versions of
Java, which meant PCs
were still vulnerable.
Many consumers aren't
aware they use Java,
which comes pre-installed
on many PCs and helps
with the operation of
many web-based func-
tions, including online
calculators, games, cha-
trooms and even viewing
3D images. The FTC esti-
mates Java can be found
on more than 850 million
PCs.

Oracle was aware since
2010 that older versions

of Java had security flaws
that left their users vul-
nerable to malicious attacks,
according to the FTC. But
earlier update procedures
installed a new version of
the program without re-
moving the older ones.
Oracle later changed its
Java update tool to make
it remove the most recent
version, the FTC says. But
until August 2014, the tool
still left some older versions
untouched.

The FTC says Oracle re-
vised its Java update tool
again last year, to help us-
ers remove all earlier ver-
sions. Even so, some PC us-

ers may still have older ver-
sions on their machines. In
a statement announcing
the settlement, the FTC
said Oracle's internal doc-
uments show that it knew
that its earlier procedures
left some PCs vulnerable
to hacking, despite its as-
surances to PC users. An
Oracle spokeswoman de-
clined comment Monday.
Without admitting any
wrongdoing, Oracle set-
tled an FTC complaint
by promising that current
and future Java updates
will automatically search
for all older versions of the
software. □

Top business story in 2015: China's sharp economic slowdown

PAUL WISEMAN

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — China's economy lost some luster and its leaders their aura of invincibility. A commodities boom went bust, spreading pain from Texas oil fields to Indonesian coal mines.

Seven years of near-zero interest rates ended in the United States, while easy money kept flowing elsewhere. Volkswagen cheated on emissions tests. And the rise of Uber intensified a debate about the definition of an employee.

China's sharp slowdown was chosen as the top business story of 2015 by business editors at The Associated Press, followed by the plunge in energy prices.

Here are the top business stories of the year:

CHINA'S SLOWDOWN

It took five years for people to become really worried over China's slow-motion economic deceleration. The freak-out finally hit global markets in August. Between Aug. 10 and Aug. 25, the Dow Jones industrial average plunged 11 percent on fears that everyone had underestimated China's troubles and their impact on the rest of the world.

China's deceleration is part of an official plan to shift from unsustainable growth from exports and wasteful investment to slower but steadier expansion based on consumer spending. Yet its leaders tarnished their reputation for economic stewardship by clumsily intervening to prop up plunging stock prices. Then they shocked and confused markets by devaluing the Chinese currency.

Economists began to conclude that China's official story — that its economy was growing at around a brisk 7 percent a year — was far too rosy and that growth might be closer to 5 percent or 6 percent and likely to weaken further.

COMMODITY COLLAPSE

China's slowdown and a global oil glut crushed commodities and energy prices. The Standard &

Poor's GSCI commodities index has plunged 34 percent this year to its lowest level since 1999, down 80 percent from its peak. And the main culprit was China's slowdown. When they were booming, Chinese factories devoured about half the world's copper, aluminum, nickel and steel.

On Dec. 16, the Fed declared that the economy was finally healthy enough to withstand a modest rate hike: It raised the short-term rate it controls from a range of zero to 0.25 percent to one of 0.25 percent to 0.50 percent. But with Europe and Japan still struggling and China decelerat-

ation was left in tatters.

BIG 'GIG' ECONOMY

The growth of the ride service Uber ignited a debate about the "gig economy," in which people don't hold regular jobs in traditional workplaces but rather work as some version of a freelancer: Uber drivers tooling

ine Draft would be joined by a \$106 billion deal between Anheuser-Busch InBev and SABMiller. Dow Chemical and DuPont announced a merger worth \$60 billion in a desperate bid to counter shrunken commodities prices. Pfizer and Allergan reached a \$149 billion deal to bring Pfizer's Viagra and Allergan's Botox under one corporate roof. Dell is buying the data-storage company EMC for \$66 billion. Walgreens offered to buy rival drugstore chain Rite Aid for \$9.4 billion, a deal that raised questions among regulators at the Federal Trade Commission.

EXPLODING AIR BAGS

Japan's Takata Corp. admitted concealing evidence for years that its air bags could explode — a defect linked to eight deaths and more than 100 injuries worldwide.

Takata agreed to pay U.S. regulators a \$70 million fine. It also agreed to phase out air bag inflators that use ammonium nitrate, which was blamed for the explosions. Ford, Honda, Toyota and Nissan have decided against putting the inflators in cars and trucks now under development.

NET NEUTRALITY

Cable and telecom companies fought it out with regulators over control of the Internet. The Federal Communications Commission issued "net neutrality" rules designed to bar Internet service providers from offering preferential treatment to sites that pay for faster service. Consumer groups and content companies such as Netflix support the new rules. But service providers such as Comcast and Verizon say the rules would limit innovation and discourage investment in broadband infrastructure.

DRIVER-LESS CARS

Automakers and tech companies such as Google, Alibaba and Baidu scrambled to develop cars that would drive themselves. Nissan let reporters take a test drive in a self-driving car. Electric carmaker Tesla



A beer vender holds up Budweiser and Bud Light at Wrigley Field before Game 4 in baseball's National League Division Series between the Chicago Cubs and the St. Louis Cardinals in Chicago. In 2015, corporate America announced a wave of mergers and acquisitions, including some whoppers: Arch-rival brewers Budweiser and Miller Genuine Draft would be joined by a \$106 billion deal between Anheuser-Busch InBev and SABMiller, in one of The Associated Press' top stories in 2015. (AP Photo/Paul Beaty)

Oil prices, too, tumbled from \$98 a barrel two years ago to under \$35. The biggest factor was unrestrained production across the world, which led to a huge supply glut. In response, energy companies slashed investment in America's oil patch. And workers lost jobs in Zambian mines, Indonesian coal pits and Australian ports. But consumers enjoyed a windfall: Near year's end, U.S. motorists were paying just \$2 a gallon for gasoline, down from \$2.47 a year ago.

END OF FREE MONEY

When the Fed cut short-term interest rates to near zero in December 2008, the American economy was losing hundreds of thousands of jobs a month. The financial system had nearly toppled. The rate cut was an emergency response. No one expected it to last. But it did — for seven years.

ing, the European Central Bank, the Bank of Japan and the People's Bank of China had gone in the reverse direction: They acted to continue or expand their easy-money policies.

VW CAUGHT CHEATING

In the first half of 2015, Volkswagen passed Toyota as the world's top-selling automaker. The triumph didn't last long. On Sept. 18, the Environmental Protection Agency revealed that VW had cheated on emissions tests for hundreds of thousands of diesel cars it had marketed as "green."

It was a stunning case of corporate malfeasance. CEO Martin Winterkorn resigned, VW announced plans to recall 11 million cars globally and set aside \$7 billion to pay for them. In the United States, where more than 500,000 VW cars have been recalled, several government agencies are investigating. VW's rep-

around town in their own cars. Homebound app designers laboring to produce a hit for the Apple Store. Carpenters selling their services on the website Thumbtack.

Supporters say the gig economy drives innovation and gives workers unparalleled freedom. Critics worry that it lets companies label workers as "independent contractors" to avoid providing overtime, workers' compensation or unemployment insurance.

MEGA MERGERS

Corporate America received an overhaul in 2015: Companies announced a wave of mergers and acquisitions worth nearly \$4.8 trillion, busting a record set in 2007, according to Dealogic. The number of mega-mergers worth \$10 billion or more also set a record. The list includes some whoppers: Arch-rival brewers Budweiser and Miller Genu-

STREET BRIEFS

Norfolk Southern rejects Canadian Pacific buyout bid

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Norfolk Southern still isn't interested in Canadian Pacific's sweetened offer of roughly \$31 billion to buy the railroad.

Norfolk Southern's board unanimously rejected the latest offer Wednesday because the bid remains "grossly inadequate" and unlikely to be approved by regulators. Norfolk Southern says if Canadian Pacific is serious about the offer, it should ask regulators for preliminary approval of the deal's proposed structure. Canadian Pacific rejected that idea last week as unnecessary. Canadian Pacific spokesman Martin Cej said the railroad couldn't immediately comment Wednesday morning. Canadian Pacific has estimated that its cash and stock offer could be worth as much as roughly \$40 billion to \$45 billion.

But much of that is based on the projected value of stock in a new company that would own both railroads.

Turing cuts jobs, looks for new CEO after Shkreli left

TALI ARBEL
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Turing Pharmaceuticals, the company formerly led by pharma bad boy Martin Shkreli, says it has cut jobs, "realigned its business priorities" and is looking for a new permanent CEO. Shkreli resigned Friday, a day after his arrest on charges of securities fraud related to a company he previously ran. He pleaded not guilty and was released on \$5 million bail.

He had been reviled for hiking the price of Daraprim by 5,000 percent. It's the only approved drug for toxoplasmosis, a life-threatening parasitic infection that mainly strikes pregnant women, cancer patients and AIDS patients.

□

US consumer spending, incomes up in November

M. CRUTSINGER

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. consumer spending rebounded in November after a weak showing in October, while a key inflation gauge posted the fastest year-over-year increase in 11 months.

Spending increased 0.3 percent in November after an essentially flat reading in October and a 0.2 percent gain in September, the Commerce Department said Wednesday. Personal income rose a solid 0.3 percent in November, reflecting solid gains in wages and salaries, after a 0.4 percent October increase.

Economists are predicting that further improvement in the job market will support consumer spending in coming months.

Paul Ashworth, chief U.S. economist at Capital Economics, said that the new economic data supported his view that the overall economy will expand at a moderate 2 percent rate in the current October-December quarter, helped by solid growth in consumer spending.

"Even if investment ends up being a bit weaker than we were expecting, real consumption growth is on track for a 2.5 percent annualized gain in the fourth quarter," Ashworth said in a research note. Consumer spending grew at a 3 percent rate in the July-September quarter.

A key inflation gauge was up 0.4 percent in Novem-



A man carries bags out of a department store, in Alameda, Calif. U.S. consumer spending rebounded in November after a weak showing in October, while a key inflation gauge posted the fastest year-over-year increase in 11 months. The Commerce Department said Wednesday, Dec. 23, that consumer spending increased 0.3 percent in November after an essentially flat reading in October and a 0.2 percent gain in September.

(AP Photo/Ben Margot)

ber compared with a year ago, the biggest year-over-year jump since last December. Inflation is being closely watched by the Federal Reserve to determine the pace for hiking interest rates.

The Fed boosted a key rate for the first time in nearly a decade last week by a quarter-point to 0.25 percent to 0.5 percent. Fed Chair Janet Yellen said that the Fed will be closely watching progress in meeting the Fed's 2 percent inflation target to help determine the pace of future rate hikes. Many economists believe the Fed will

raise rates three or four times in 2016.

The 0.4 percent year-over-year increase in the inflation gauge tied to consumer spending came after a 0.2 percent yearly rise in October. It was the biggest 12-month jump since a 0.8 percent increase in December of last year.

Yellen has said that she expects overall inflation to move up in 2016 as the favorable effects of last year's big declines in gasoline start to fade. Outside of food and energy, core inflation was up 1.3 percent in November compared to a year ago, the 11th con-

secutive month core inflation has recorded a 1.3 percent yearly increase.

The personal saving rate edged down to 5.5 percent of after-tax income in November compared to 5.6 percent in October.

The data on consumer spending was inadvertently released by the government on Wednesday, ahead of the scheduled Thursday release time. The Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Commerce agency which produces the spending report, said it would take steps to guard against future early releases of sensitive data. □

Orders for US durable goods unchanged in November

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Factory orders for long-lasting goods such as autos, airplanes and electronics were flat in November, as the impact of a strong dollar and struggling global economy weigh on U.S. manufacturers.

Orders for durable goods were nearly unchanged in November after a 2.9 percent increase in October, the Commerce Department said Wednesday. Demand for autos, electronic prod-

ucts and fabricated metals accelerated last month, but their gains were offset by declines in machinery and non-defense aircraft. Orders for capital goods not including aircraft — a key proxy for business investment — fell 0.4 percent. Durable goods orders have tumbled 3.7 percent year-to-date. Slow economic growth among major U.S. trading partners — including Europe, China and Japan — has caused the dollar to rise in value, making

U.S. goods more expensive overseas and less competitive. Lower oil prices have also squeezed demand for pipelines and equipment by energy companies.

"The manufacturing sector still looks fairly weak — weaker than non-manufacturing, reflecting more exposure to declining exports, a plunge in oil-related investment and an inventory cycle" where wholesalers are reducing their stockpiles, said Jim O'Sullivan, chief U.S. economist at

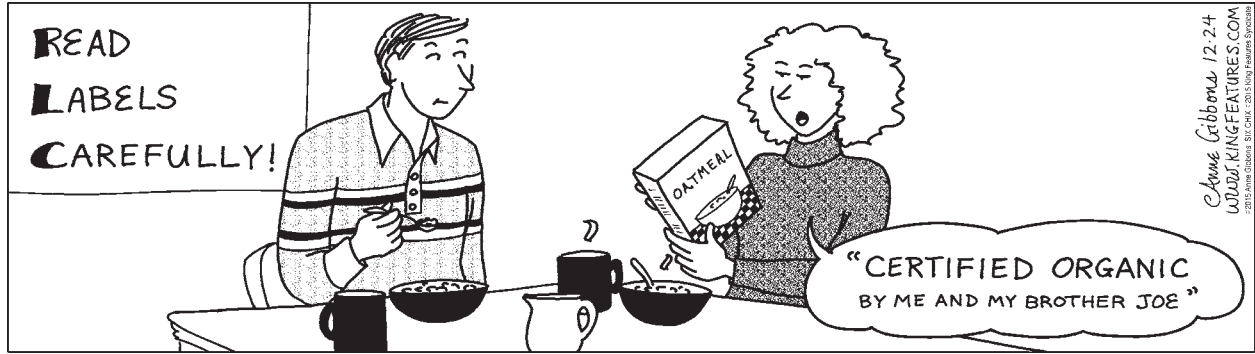
High Frequency Economics. Much of this year's decline in orders comes from a 36.9 percent drop in the commercial aircraft category, along with waning demand for machinery and primary metals. Those losses have hurt factory hiring in recent months and cut into exports abroad.

The dollar has appreciated more than 11 percent in the past 12 months against a basket of foreign currencies, according to the Federal Reserve. □

Mutts



6 Chix



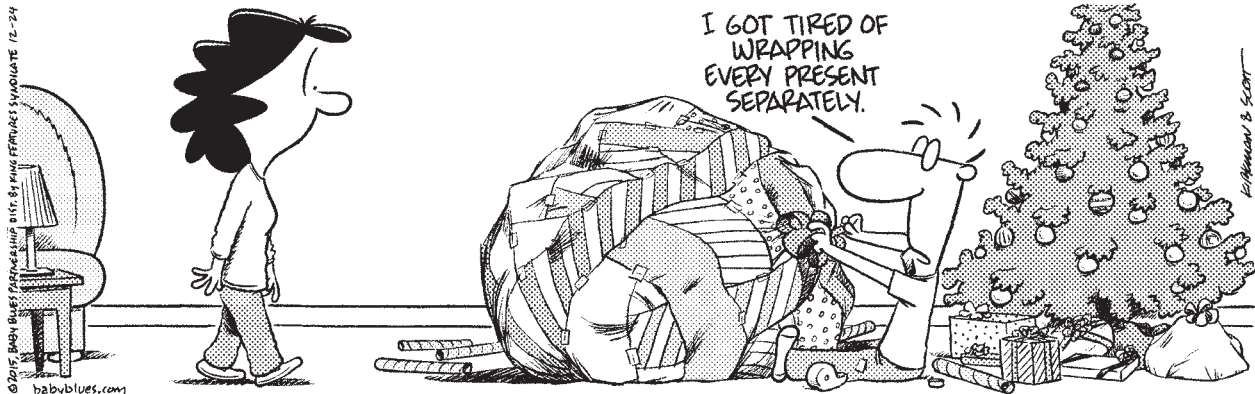
Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

6			1	3	5		7
	8			2		4	
1							
3							6
	4					2	
2							4
							1
	2			5		9	
7		1	4		6		8

Difficulty Level ★★★ 12/24

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

6	5	3	8	2	9	1	4	7
7	8	4	1	5	3	6	9	2
1	2	9	7	4	6	5	8	3
5	6	8	2	9	7	3	1	4
4	3	1	6	8	5	7	2	9
9	7	2	4	3	1	8	5	6
2	4	6	5	7	8	9	3	1
8	9	7	3	1	2	4	6	5
3	1	5	9	6	4	2	7	8

ACROSS

- 1 Amazes
- 5 Thickset
- 10 "___ well that ends well"
- 14 Actor Sandler
- 15 Babble
- 16 Gather crops
- 17 Fizzy drink
- 18 Turning part in a machine
- 19 Alpha's follower
- 20 Ironed
- 22 Raves about
- 24 Go quickly
- 25 Goliath, for one
- 26 Actress Corby
- 29 Tiny vegetable
- 30 Gets closer to
- 34 Tavern drinks
- 35 "Peter ___"
- 36 Remorse
- 37 Opening; space
- 38 Hospital worker
- 40 Daniel ___ Kim
- 41 Come forth
- 43 Singer Orbison
- 44 Apple pie à la

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
20					21			22		23				
					24			25						
26	27	28				29				30	31	32	33	
34					35				36					
37					38			39			40			
41		42					43				44			
45							46				47			
					48	49			50					
51	52	53						54			55	56	57	
58						59	60				61			
62						63					64			
65						65					67			

Created by Jacqueline E. Matthews 12/24/15

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

DINES	ADDS	SLUR
IRISH	SOAK	TALE
PONCE	SODA	ARCS
SNEAKIER	TARGET	
PENT	PESTERS	
ANGELA	CORAL	
BEA	SNEER	NEARS
CAMP	EBSEN	SLAW
STEAL	BASES	AGE
RISER	PHASED	
PORTEND	WARD	
RWANDA	DELIRIUM	
ONCE	PLEA	NOOSE
BEER	PEAR	KITES
ERRS	YENS	STASH

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- 6 Walked on
- 7 Cereal grain
- 8 Perfect place
- 9 ___ firma; solid ground
- 10 Dispute settler
- 11 Marvin and Majors
- 12 Tardy
- 13 Jacuzzi
- 21 Moral offense
- 23 Irk
- 25 TV's "___ Hospital"
- 26 Enthusiastic
- 27 Peruvian pack animal
- 28 Hansen's disease victim
- 29 Cushion
- 31 Zeal
- 32 Highways
- 33 Neil Diamond's "___ Caroline"
- 35 Prefix for view or heat
- 36 As ___ as a fox
- 38 Meanies
- 39 Steal from

DOWN

- 1 Stinging insect
- 2 Smell
- 3 Get one's feet wet
- 4 Crushes violently
- 5 Shopping ___; buyer's binge

- 42 Turns over a new leaf
- 44 Desert visions
- 46 Gambling house
- 47 Swim ___; diver's flipper
- 49 Rejuvenate
- 50 Types; varieties
- 51 Likelihood
- 52 ___ over; study intently
- 53 Sulk
- 54 Whiplash site
- 55 Objective
- 56 Hold ___; keep
- 57 Robin's home
- 60 Civic or Camry

Classifieds

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wk 40	room 336	\$3,750
wk 40	room 105	\$5,000
wk 42	room 338	\$4,000
wk 43	room 329	\$3,250
wk 49	room 144	\$5,500
wk 50	room 546	\$6,000
wk 49	room 2571	\$3,750
wk 48	room 517	\$3,750
wk 48 or 49	room 119	\$4,750
wk 48 or 49	room 551	\$5,500
wk 49 or 50	room 203	\$5,500
wk 21 or 22	room 347	\$4,000

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week 3 \$1,400 ST
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2 Bedroom Gold O.F. Price :\$14500
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2 Bedroom Platinum O.F. Price :\$30000
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Price :\$8000
1 bedroom week 2 Room #1006
35 weeks remain on the contract
Price :\$8000
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Aruba Airlines	583-8300
Jet Blue	588-2244
Surinam	582-7896
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SpaceX launches rocket 6 months after accident, then lands



The SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifts off over Cocoa Beach, Fla., at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Monday, Dec. 21, 2015. The rocket, carrying several communications satellites for Orbcomm, Inc., is the first launch of the rocket since a failed mission to the International Space Station in June. (Craig Rubadoux/Florida Today via AP)

MARCIA DUNN
AP Aerospace Writer

(AP) - SpaceX sent a Falcon rocket soaring toward orbit this week with 11 small satellites, its first mission since an accident last summer. Then in an even more astounding feat, it landed the 15-story leftover booster back on Earth safely. It was the first time an unmanned rocket returned

to land vertically at Cape Canaveral, Florida, and represented a tremendous success for SpaceX. The company led by billionaire Elon Musk is striving for reusability to drive launch costs down and open up space to more people. "Welcome back, baby!" Musk tweeted after touchdown. "It's a revolutionary mo-

ment," Musk later told reporters. "No one has ever brought a booster, an orbital-class booster, back intact." What's significant is that this was a useful mission, Musk noted, not merely a practice flight. "We achieved recovery of the rocket in a mission that actually deployed 11 satellites," he said. SpaceX em-

ployees broke into cheers and chants, some of them jumping up and down, following the smooth touchdown nine minutes after liftoff. Previous landing attempts ended in fiery blasts, but those aimed for an ocean platform. Musk said he ran outside and heard the sonic boom of the returning booster just as it landed; he assumed it had exploded. He learned the happy truth when he went back into Launch Control and saw video of the standing rocket. "I can't quite believe it," he said. "It's quite shocking." Musk said the landing appeared close to perfect and the company "could not have asked for a better mission or a better day." The top officer at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Brig. Gen. Wayne Monteith, noted that the returning booster "placed the exclamation mark on 2015." "This was a first for us at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, and I can't even begin to describe the excitement the team feels right now having been a part of this historic

first-stage rocket landing," Monteith said in a statement. Across the country, SpaceX employees jammed company headquarters in Hawthorne, California, anxiously awaiting success. They cheered at full throttle when the first stage separated cleanly two minutes into flight and reoriented itself for an unprecedented return to Cape Canaveral. Then the roar became deafening, as TV cameras showed the first-stage booster landing on extended legs at its new, dedicated landing zone. SpaceX commentators called it "incredibly exciting" and were visibly moved by the feat. "This has been a wildly successful return to flight for SpaceX," said one SpaceX launch commentator. "We made history today." Blue Origin, another billionaire's rocket company, successfully landed a booster last month in West Texas. That rocket, though, had been used for a sub-orbital flight. The SpaceX booster was more powerful and flying faster in order to put satellites into orbit. □

NASA calls off next Mars mission; no time to fix leaky seal

MIKE SCHNEIDER
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — NASA is calling off its next mission to Mars because there isn't enough time to fix a leaky seal on a key science instrument. The InSight spacecraft was set for launch in March. The problem is with a protective pouch around the lander's seismometer, which was designed to measure ground movement on the red planet. NASA managers and French designers of the in-

strument said Tuesday they must now decide whether the pouch's vacuum seal needs to be repaired, redesigned or the mission scrapped. The next opportunity to launch the InSight lander is in May 2018 since the best chances of launching missions between Earth and Mars occur for just a few weeks every 26 months. "We're close enough to launch but unfortunately we don't have enough time to try to identify the leak, fix it and recover and

still make it to the launch pad in March," said John Grunsfeld, NASA's science mission chief. The goal of the mission was to explore the interior core, mantle and crust of Mars in a way that no other planet has been studied outside of Earth. So far, \$525 million has spent on the \$675 million mission. "We know the interior of Earth and its structure very well, but of the other planets, Mars is our only hope to make those kinds of measurements," said Jim

Green, director of NASA's Planetary Science Division. NASA managers said it could take several months of analysis and discussion before they decide how to proceed. A redesign of the part could make the 2018 opportunity unlikely since it could take up to five years. NASA officials said the delay of the InSight mission wouldn't affect the schedule of any other missions to Mars. The three sensors on the seismometer need a vacuum seal around them to

withstand the harsh, frigid Martian environment. Leaks had showed up during previous tests and mission team members thought the problem had been fixed. But the latest tests this week showed another leak of unknown origin. The spacecraft was delivered to Vandenberg Air Force Base in California last week in anticipation of a launch. It will be sent back to Lockheed Martin's plant in Denver. It would have landed on Mars six months after launch. □

'Star Wars' named Associated Press Entertainer of the Year



This photo provided by Disney shows, Adam Driver as Kylo Ren with his Lightsaber in a scene from the new film, "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." "Star Wars" isn't just strong. It's unstoppable. The revival of the nearly 40-year-old space saga has already dominated the box office and toy shelves. Now, it's also been selected as The Associated Press Entertainer of the Year and is amassing support for Academy Awards consideration. (Film Frame/Disney/Copyright Lucasfilm 2015 via AP)

DERRIK J. LANG

AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — "Star Wars" isn't just strong. It's unstoppable.

The revival of the nearly 40-year-old space saga has already dominated the box office and toy shelves. Now, it's also been selected as The Associated Press Entertainer of the Year and is amassing support for Academy Awards consideration.

"Personally, it's been three years of feeling privileged to be part of something that's bigger than all of us," filmmaker J.J. Abrams told the AP in an interview. "This accolade is very much appreciated and no exception to that feeling."

"Star Wars" won the AP's annual Entertainer of the Year contest with a volley of votes from members that would rival the firepower of the First Order.

The sci-fi series bested Adele, Taylor Swift and Amy Schumer as the top vote getter. Others up for the honor included streaming services, Jon Stewart, Jennifer Lawrence, Taraji P. Henson, Viola Davis and the Kardashians. Voters were asked to consider who had the most influence on entertainment and culture in 2015.

"In a year full of sequels, reboots and returns, none have recaptured the zeitgeist like 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens,'" wrote Nick Dutro of The Advertiser-Tribune in Tiffin, Ohio.

The initial impact of a "Star Wars" resurgence first began reverberating across the pop-culture landscape in 2012 when Disney acquired Lucasfilm for more than \$4 billion, plotting a pair of movie spin-offs and a new trilogy merging veterans Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill), Leia Organa (Carrie Fisher) and Han Solo (Harrison Ford) with newcomers Rey (Daisy Ridley), Finn (John Boyega) and Kylo Ren (Adam Driver).

In the year leading up to the December release of "The Force Awakens," Disney and Lucasfilm unleashed a barrage of "Star Wars" merchandise, comic books and video games that fueled anticipation for the film.

When the movie opened in theaters, "The Force Awakens" lit up screens — and fans' eyeballs — brighter than a lightsaber. With an astronomical \$248 million debut at the box office last weekend, the newest "Star Wars" entry trampled over the record for biggest debut in North America, set earlier in the year by "Jurassic World."

"The Force Awakens" also has won over most critics, despite not being screened for them ahead of the film's mammoth Dec. 14 premiere in Hollywood. The American Film Institute selected it as one of its 10 best movies of the year, and the Critics' Choice Awards added it as an 11th best picture

nominee, leading many to have faith in "The Force Awakens" as a viable Oscar contender.

"The 'Star Wars' franchise is holding an IOU that it could cash in this year," said Tom O'Neil, editor-in-

chief of Gold Derby, a site that handicaps Hollywood awards and other events. "The Oscars owe major love to the 'Star Wars' franchise. It's one of the most successful and beloved franchises in Hollywood history. It's criminal that Oscar voters have never historically taken sci-fi seriously." While previous "Star Wars" films garnered 22 nominations and seven wins at the Academy Awards, only the original "Star Wars" earned a best picture nod. It lost to "Annie Hall" in 1978. "The Force Awakens" is already on the academy's short list for a visual effects nomination with 9 other films, and O'Neil is hopeful that it will be among the best picture candidates when the Oscar nominations are announced Jan. 14. □



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8:00 PM



Friday

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Tuesday

Local Talent Show by JAJA
8:00 PM



Saturday

Violin Night by ANGELA
8:00 PM



Wednesday

Latin dance show by a local dance group
8:00 PM



Sunday

Local Talent Show by ANNIA
8:00 PM



Thursday

Acrobatic Show
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Nightly

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'Hit the Quan' rapper navigates success, personal troubles

NICOLE EVATT

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — You may not know the name iLoveMemphis, but you've likely heard the rapper's catchy track "Hit the Quan" or watched one of the viral videos featuring the song's playful dance. The song marked a breakthrough for the 22-year-old, who achieved a Top 20 pop hit with the tune and also performed on "The El-

len DeGeneres Show."

iLoveMemphis' career is rising, but he's facing legal charges in his hometown of Memphis, Tennessee. According to a police affidavit, the performer, whose real name is Richard Colbert, and several others, are accused of having non-consensual sexual contact with an intoxicated woman at a party on May 30.

"Never would ever do



Richard Colbert, professionally known as rapper iLoveMemphis from Memphis, Tenn., poses for a photo during an interview to discuss his debut single, the viral dance hit "Hit The Quan" at Associated Press, in Los Angeles. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes)

such a thing," Colbert told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "I love women to death. My mom has eight kids, so I've grown up with five sisters, including my mom. So, you know, yeah, that's the last thing that I would ever, ever, ever get myself into." In a statement to the AP, Colbert added that his lawyer is working to clear his name, and that he is positive that he will be vindicated of the "viciously false allegations." Colbert's case is now on hold, pending consideration by a grand jury. If convicted of aggravated rape, he would face 15 to 60 years in prison. Vince Higgins, communications director for the Shelby County district attorney general, said in an email, "We can make no comment on any of the facts of the case." While some musicians have emerged from seri-

ous charges relatively unscathed, Kiyonna Anthony of the entertainment website Global Grind said it's difficult to predict how the allegations will affect Colbert's career. She pointed to rapper Tupac Shakur and more recently CeeLo Green as examples of stars who weathered legal troubles. "Some artists don't come out successful," Anthony said. "Like a rapper Mystikal, who was big in the '90s, was charged with aggravated rape and he served four years and after that no one really heard from him." But she said Colbert's up-and-coming status may work in his favor when it comes to public opinion: "If he was already on a mainstream level, this would knock him back a few notches." "Hit the Quan" became a Top 10 hit on both the Billboard rap and R&B/Hip-

Hop songs charts, and it peaked at No. 15 on the Hot 100 chart. The music video has earned millions of views, and the single has sold 587,969 tracks so far. The idea for "Quan" came as Colbert was dancing in his backyard to rapper Rich Homie Quan's song "Flex (Ooh, Ooh, Ooh)." He rushed to the studio and finished the track in one session — and on a shoe-string budget. "I paid \$35 and I didn't look back," he said. "I dropped it on Sunday. By Tuesday I knew it was a hit." Celebrities including Dwayne Johnson, Chris Brown, Kendrick Lamar and Terry Crews — along with toddlers, teens and even police officers — have hopped on the dance craze and posted videos featuring Colbert's moves. The performer said he's wanted to be a rapper since the seventh grade. □

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SAT, SUN & HOL 3:15 | 6:15 | 9:15

CHRISTIAN BALE | STEVE CARELL

THE BIG SHORT
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 4:00 | 6:30 | 9:15
FRI 4:00 | 6:30 | 9:15
SAT 3:45 | 6:30 | 9:15
SUN & HOL 3:45 | 6:30 | 9:15

NEW THIS WEEK!

CONCUSSION
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 3:50 | 6:30 | 9:10
FRI 3:50 | 6:30 | 9:10 | 11:50
SAT 3:50 | 6:30 | 9:10 | 11:50
SUN & HOL 3:50 | 6:30 | 9:10

ANNA FARIS | JUSTIN LONG

ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: ROAD CHIP
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 4:30 | 6:40 | 8:50
FRI 4:30 | 6:40 | 8:50 | 11:00
SAT 2:20 | 4:30 | 6:40 | 8:50 | 11:00
SUN & HOL 2:20 | 4:30 | 6:40 | 8:50

ALSO SHOWING!

STAR WARS
THE FORCE AWAKENS
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 5:30 | 8:30
FRI 5:30 | 8:30 | 11:30
SAT 2:25 | 5:30 | 8:30 | 11:30
SUN & HOL 2:25 | 5:30 | 8:30

AMY POEHLER | TINA FEY

SISTERS
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 4:15 | 6:50 | 9:25
FRI 4:15 | 6:50 | 9:25 | 12:05
SAT 1:15 | 4:15 | 6:50 | 9:25 | 12:05
SUN & HOL 1:15 | 4:15 | 6:50 | 9:25

CHRIS HEMSWORTH | CILLIAN MURPHY

IN THE HEART OF THE SEA
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-THURS 9:00
FRI-SAT 9:00 | 11:35
SUN & HOL 9:00

JEFFREY WRIGHT | FRANCES MCDORMAND

THE GOOD DINOSAUR
WITH SPANISH SUBTITLES
MON-FRI 4:30 | 6:45
SAT, SUN & HOL 2:15 | 4:30 | 6:45

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'Real Housewives' star released from prison

DANBURY, Conn. (AP) — One of New Jersey's "Real Housewives" has been freed after serving nearly a year in prison for bankruptcy fraud. A lawyer for Teresa Giudice (JOO'-dys) says she was freed at about 5 a.m. Wednesday from the Danbury Federal Correctional Institution

in Connecticut. She will travel home to Montville, New Jersey, and will be on home confinement until Feb. 5. Giudice was sent to prison in January. She and her husband, Joe Giudice, pleaded guilty last year to bankruptcy fraud. They admitted hiding assets from bankruptcy creditors and

submitting phony loan applications to get about \$5 million in mortgages and construction loans. Joe Giudice is expected to start his own prison sentence in March. A federal judge staggered the couple's sentences in deference to their four daughters. □

Review: Jennifer Lawrence carries ambitious, imperfect 'Joy'



This photo shows, Jennifer Lawrence as Joy in a scene from the film, "Joy." The movie opens in U.S. theaters on Dec. 25, 2015.

SANDY COHEN

AP Entertainment Writer

Jennifer Lawrence is a force, whether as the hero of "The Hunger Games" or the overburdened, inventive single mother she plays in "Joy."

The Oscar winner is in every frame of David O. Russell's new film, shining even among a star-studded cast with a performance that brings continuity to the writer-director's ambitious but flawed story about the dogged persistence of a determined entrepreneur. Lawrence plays the title character, Joy, whose last name is never revealed but who's based on real-life

home-shopping magnate Joy Mangano, creator of the Miracle Mop and an executive producer of the film. Text onscreen at its opening says it is "inspired by true stories of daring women, one in particular." Russell's eighth feature film (and third collaboration with Lawrence) introduces Joy in the years before she makes herself a millionaire. Working in a meaningless job, she struggles as the financial and emotional center of a dysfunctional, multigenerational family. She lives in a crumbling house with her grandmother (Diane Ladd), her soap-opera obsessed mom (Vir-

ginia Madsen), along with her two children and her ex-husband, who lives in the basement.

Flashbacks and daydreams show Joy as a bright, imaginative child who reluctantly followed a more conventional path when family responsibilities took hold. But when a flash of inspiration hits after years of life dissatisfaction, she bets her future on it.

With moral support from her grandmother and ex-husband, seed money from her father's wealthy girlfriend (Isabella Rossellini), and a glimmer of hope from a QVC executive (Bradley Cooper), Joy

stakes everything she has on her new invention: a self-wringing mop with a machine-washable head. Along the way, she experiences elation and despair, personally and professionally. Lawrence brings all the power and intensity required to portray a devoted mother and fierce businesswoman growing up through her 30s, even if the actress looks sweetly youthful throughout. It's her fire and range that speaks. And the 25-year-old star doesn't take anything away from older actresses, who relish in delicious opportunities of their own. Rossellini, 63, is perfectly cast as an Italian widow, while 80-year-old Ladd glows as a doting grandmother and the film's narrator. Madsen, 54, melts into her character, a recluse in oversized glasses whose whole world is a TV soap opera starring Susan Lucci. Lucci, 68, plays a powerful heroine in the fictional soap that's meant to be analogous to Joy's journey of self-discovery, but the technique doesn't really work, especially since the mother's obsession with the show seems to border on mental illness. Still, it's great to see Lucci back in

her element.

Returning Russell collaborators Robert DeNiro ("Silver Linings Playbook") and Cooper ("Silver Linings Playbook," "American Hustle") each predictably deliver, even if their characters aren't well-drawn. At one point, Cooper's sympathetic home-shopping exec tells Joy he's too busy to hear her pitch, then goes into a lengthy explanation about the history of QVC, which seems oddly expository. The script suffers from further clunkiness when Joy explains her business plans to her 5-year-old daughter (endearingly played by twins Aundrea and Gia Gadsby).

While Russell had unfettered access to Mangano, he says he took liberties with the facts of her story, creating a fictional half-sister (Elisabeth Rohm) to add drama beyond the despondent mom and codependent dad. It's hard to know what really happened, but it seems like a woman supporting her family while building a multimillion-dollar fortune with nothing more than ingenuity and determination would be dramatic enough. □

Review: Savagery and virtuosity mingle in 'The Revenant'

JAKE COYLE

AP Film Writer

Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu's frontier survival saga "The Revenant," filmed in the Canadian Rockies, seeks to join the ranks of Werner Herzog's "Fitzcarraldo" and Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now": movies that take some of their primal madness from their raw, remote natural landscapes. The making of those movies are mythic tales in their own right, and "The Revenant" arrives with its own tall tales of on-set tussles and actor derring-do. After confining himself largely to the interior of a Broadway theater — and the psyche of Michael Keaton's Riggan Thomson — in the best picture-winning "Birdman," Inarritu and his maverick cinematographer, Emmanuel Lubezki,

have opted for the open air of the West, circa 1823, in a loose adaptation of Michael Punke's 2002 novel about the frontiersman Hugh Glass (Leonardo DiCaprio).

The result is some of the most ravishing filmmaking of the year, or any year, as Inarritu and Lubezki stretch their fluid long takes down river rapids and into the kind of clashes — a mauling grizzly, an ambushing tribe — not rendered before with this kind of awe-inspiring, naturally lit virtuosity. But awe is the only thing "The Revenant" is well stocked in, if you don't count snow and beards.

"The Revenant" isn't just showy about its audacity, it's relentlessly chest-thumping. DiCaprio isn't the film's true star; it's Inarritu's camera. He never lets



This photo shows, Leonardo DiCaprio in a scene from the film, "The Revenant."

(Twentieth Century Fox via AP)

us forget it, not just in staggering one-takes but by allowing characters to look into the lens, sometimes even fogging it with their breath. "The Revenant" earns your admiration, only to lose it by continually insisting upon it.

Somewhere in the realm of the Dakotas and Montana is the Rocky Mountain Fur Co., guided by Glass in

their pursuit through hostile and uncompromising territory for beaver pelts. In our first view of the trappers, they're camped in river-side pines when an eerie suspense settles over them. Arrows from all around sail into them before Ree tribesmen, searching for a stolen daughter, stream into the camp. With mayhem and sav-

agery all around, Inarritu's balletic camera sweeps through the slaughter and eventually drifts down the river with small band of survivors. Among them are Glass, his Pawnee son (Forrest Goodluck), the company's leader, Andrew Henry (Domhnall Gleeson), a callow youngster (Will Poulter) and John Fitzgerald (Tom Hardy). □

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